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JOHN DORRIEN

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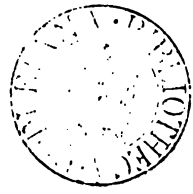

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF

"NATHALIE," "ADELE," "BESSIE,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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JOHN DORRIEN.

CHAPTER I.

IT was six o'clock, and quite dark, October being the time of the year, and yet Mrs. Dorrien, who was to have been home by five, had not come back from town. Johnny, as he sat perched up on his high chair, looking down at the fire in the grate before him, wondered rather anxiously what kept his mother out so late. We call him Johnny because he was only ten years old, and a very little fellow, too, for that time of life. He was not a fine boy, nor yet a handsome one. He was undersized, to begin with, and his little face was thin and pale—the face of a child who stays too much within. Even the firelight, which showed so plainly the turned-up nose and pointed chin, could not pretend to give the glow of health to what it lit

up. And yet, seen by that fitful light—there was none other in the room, Johnny being strictly forbidden to touch the petroleum oil lamp—it had a quaint charm of its own. The brow, around which clustered rich brown curls, was firmly and finely moulded. The eyes, of a dark grey, were so beautiful, so full of light and fire, and yet so deep and tender, that if you had seen them once, you never forgot them again, even as the mobile expressive countenance never left your memory when you had once watched its wonderful play. In repose it had not much to recommend it to favour, for it owed nothing to colour or to clear fine outline. His beautiful eyes, and the little eager passionate soul that lived in his frail body, and shone out through them, gave Johnny his only claim to that dower of beauty which the sons and daughters of Adam would all so gladly possess.

He now sat on his high chair, his short legs dangling down, an open book on his knee. He was looking, as we said, at the fire, wondering why his mother did not come back; also listening to the kettle's low song, and waiting patiently till some bright flame should shoot up

and let him go on with "Aladdin's Lamp." It came at length—a magic flame, that took him straight into the wonderful garden, where Aladdin, *alias* Johnny, plucked rubies, sapphires, and emeralds to his heart's content. That flame lit up to advantage the room in which the boy sat. The low ceiling showed that it belonged to a second floor; but it looked a pleasant room, for all that. In that bright yet uncertain light there was no detecting the worn carpet, the faded damask curtains, the tarnished gilding of the frames on the wall. Everything looked warm and pleasant, and everything, after a fashion, was so. Mrs. Dorrien had been affluent once, and had preserved some relics of better days. A few pictures, some good china, an old Japanese cabinet, adorned her second floor sitting-room. Moreover, she had a woman's art in making the best of everything; and if Mrs. Dorrien had lived in a garret, she would have contrived so that it should not look a depressing one.

The flame, by suddenly dying away, took Johnny out of the marvellous garden, where trees bore precious stones by way of fruit, to

the dim world of a London room. The water in the kettle was boiling now, and surely Mrs. Dorrien must soon return.

"I think I shall make the tea," said Johnny, talking aloud to himself. He led a rather lonely life, and had acquired that habit.

So jumping down from his chair, he climbed up on another, to reach down the tea-caddy from the chiffonier; and in so doing he knocked down an old china tea-cup and saucer on the floor, where they were at once shattered to pieces.

"Oh! what will mamma say?" cried Johnny, bursting into tears—"oh! what will she say?"

For the cup was not merely valuable in itself, but it had been the gift of his dear father to his mother, and, of all her relics of the past, it was perhaps that which she held most dear.

The question of what Mrs. Dorrien would say was soon solved. Johnny was still sobbing bitterly over the fragments of the tea-cup, when the door opened, and his mother entered the room.

"Johnny!" she cried, in an alarmed voice, "what is the matter? Are you hurt?—what is it?"

"Oh! I—I have broken the—the cup," sobbed Johnny, desperately. "I wanted to make the tea and I broke it."

"But you are not hurt?" said his mother, anxiously.

"No; but I wanted to make the tea, and——"

Here Johnny gave way to another burst of sorrow.

Mrs. Dorrien could have cried too, for the loss of her cup, if the relief of finding that Johnny had come to no harm had not been the stronger feeling of the two. She never left him—and she had to leave him often—but she thought, "What will happen to him whilst I am out?" And she never opened her own door when she came home that her heart did not throb with a nameless fear. So, though the cup was broken, it was a relief to find Johnny safe and sound. Mrs. Dorrien lit the lamp, and Johnny, picking up the pieces of the broken cup and saucer, placed them on the table before his mother, and looking up eagerly in her face, asked if they could not be mended.

"I am afraid not, my dear," she replied,

sadly. "What is there that, being once broken, can really be mended in this world?"

With which despondent remark Mrs. Dorrien seemed to dismiss the subject of the broken cup, and, taking off her cloak and bonnet, made the tea.

Johnny's mother had married late in life, and was now forty-five. She had been lovely in her youth, and was pretty still, with a fresh colour, and very black hair and eyes. She was an active, energetic woman, and when her husband's death left her and Johnny, then one year old, destitute, she scarcely gave herself time to grieve before she sought for the means of earning a livelihood. She had been reared in comfort, she had never worked unless for her pleasure, but she fought the battle of life, when her turn came to do so, as bravely as if she had been brought up in the din of that fierce war where the strong never think of sparing the weak. For seven years she had struggled on, taking up and dropping various trades on the way, until she had at length found what, after some poverty, seemed a handsome competence, in the colouring of photographs. She had been

this day to town on business, and Johnny, her sole friend and confidant, now questioned her concerning her success whilst they took their tea; a late dinner, or, in plain speech, more than one substantial meal a day, being out of the question for Mrs. Dorrien and Johnny.

"Little mother,"—he always called her so—"did you get that order?" he asked, fastening his brilliant, searching eyes on her face.

"Yes, dear, I did. It is such a relief to be sure of that money. We are going to be quite rich now. And what have you been doing, Johnny?"

"Well, little mother, I learned my lessons, of course, and then I read about Aladdin. And oh! little mother, if I only had his lamp, how I would rub and rub it again, and give you heaps of everything—such heaps!" cried Johnny, bursting out into a peal of joyous, triumphant laughter; "and then," he resumed, relapsing into sudden gravity, "you need never colour photographs no more."

"Any more," corrected Mrs. Dorrien, a little sharply. "I wish you would talk correctly. Your father was a gentleman, and a thorough

scholar, as I have often told you. Give me your Latin grammar."

"I know my Latin lesson, little mother, indeed I do; but learning it in that French grammar of L'Homond's makes it *so* difficult," pleaded Johnny.

"Nonsense! Your father spoke French like a Frenchman; and learning Latin in a French grammar is the very best thing for you."

Johnny handed her L'Homond, and went through his task very creditably. At least his mother, who had to study her own lesson—and hard work she found it—before she heard him repeat his, expressed herself satisfied.

"And you will teach me Greek, little mother, will you not?" asked Johnny, with sparkling eyes.

"No, my dear, I cannot."

"But you said I was to know Greek," he cried, in blank disappointment.

"Well, I do hope that you will know it," replied Mrs. Dorrien. "Your father knew Greek thoroughly, I have been told, and so must you be a good Greek scholar. Only"—here Mrs. Dorrien's voice faltered, and her black eyes,

though there was not much tenderness in them, rested very fondly on her boy—"only, my dear little lad, I must send you to school. I have not the knowledge, and I have not the time, to teach you myself. I must send you to school."

Johnny's colour came and went.

"To a day-school?" he suggested.

"No, dear, to a boarding-school."

Johnny's lip twitched and his little pale face lengthened visibly; but he was brave by nature, and had been accustomed by his mother to much self-restraint, so he only said:

"Is the school far away, little mother?"

"Very far away, my dear."

"Twenty miles?" suggested Johnny.

"My dear, it is not in England," replied his mother, a little nervously; and to get rid at once of the bitter subject, she informed him that she was going to send him to a boarding-school on the coast of France, and as, though she expected and received unquestioning obedience, she was never unwilling to give good reason for what she did, Mrs. Dorrien explained to Jonnny why she had taken and now acted upon this resolution.

"You see, my darling," she said, with a sigh, "it is all very well for me to colour photographs, but you must have a classical education, and be a gentleman as your father was. You must be an accomplished man," said Mrs. Dorrien, warming with her subject—"equal to any position. Perhaps you will have to colour photographs after all," she added, with a touch of bitterness; "but one thing I will do for you: I will give you an education fit for a peer's son. I cannot do it in this country, but there is a place on the French coast called Saint Ives, where living is almost for nothing, and schooling—good schooling—is amazingly cheap. I shall keep you there for a few years, and, cheap though it is, I need not tell you how heavy a sacrifice it will be for me to do this. Only, Johnny, bear in mind that, if you do not work hard—very hard, mind you,—I might just as well keep you here and save the money."

"I will work hard," said Johnny, in a low voice.

"I want you to have a gentleman's education," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, with a persistency which showed how bitterly she felt her down-

fall in the world, "because you must be a gentleman. If you should have to colour photographs, Greek and Latin will not prevent you from doing it; and if, as I trust, you will have some better work to do, why, they can only help you with that work. But know them you shall—that is, if you will learn," she added, giving him a sharp look.

"Indeed, little mother, I will," protested Johnny, who was ready to cry from very earnestness.

"French you will learn, of course; English you will keep up with the English teacher; and if I can afford it, you shall study German. Your father knew every language in Europe—Russian excepted."

If Mrs. Dorrien had there and then asked him to include Russian in his studies, Johnny would have said yes without hesitation. They were wholly unlike in person, mind, and temper, but ambition was common to both mother and son.

"Of course you will have many things to learn besides Greek and Latin," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, after a pause. "I suppose you cannot excel in all——"

"Why not, if I try?" interrupted Johnny, his little face kindling all over with excitement.

"You must try," decisively said his mother; "but of course you cannot excel in all; only, Johnny, you must not fail entirely in anything that you do attempt. It would half break my heart; for, what with the money and the being left alone, I do not know how I shall bear it all!"

Mrs. Dorrien took out her pocket-handkerchief and began to cry, but no sooner did Johnny attempt to follow her example than she checked her own tears, and dried his with an emphatic "Nonsense!" Then, as if repenting the harshness of her tone, she bade the lad come and sit by her on the sofa—it was Johnny's bed at night,—and, with her arm caressingly passed round his neck, she spoke to him about the school to which she was sending him, and gave him every particular concerning its head, teachers, and management which she had been able to ascertain.

"You see, Johnny," said Mrs. Dorrien, "the head of that school is the Abbé Véran—one of the most learned men in France, I am told. It

is a school of the highest class, though very cheap (of course it is very dear for my means, but never mind that), and the teachers belonging to it are first-rate. The Abbé is a rich man, and does not want to make money by his pupils. He wants to make GREAT SCHOLARS of them," said Mrs. Dorrien, speaking in capitals.

Johnny opened his eyes wide and nodded.

"So when they are stupid or idle he turns them out at the end of a year," coolly remarked Mrs. Dorrien, giving Johnny a sharp look.

The boy looked more excited than alarmed at the implied threat. His little eager face plainly said that he did not mean to be turned out by the Abbé Véran.

"He turned out a great many last year, I am told," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, drawing a little upon her imagination for the latter fact. "'because,' as he properly remarks, 'why should I, who have established this school—not for profit, but for the honour of the thing—why should I keep boys so stupid or so idle that they would only disgrace my teaching?' Of course it takes some interest to get into a school of that kind; and if Mr. Perry had not answered for you,

also if you had not been the child of Catholic parents, you could not have been admitted."

"Oh! mother," cried Johnny, turning white, "will Mr. Perry give you no more photographs to colour if—if I do not please the Abbé?"

Mrs. Dorrien had a great mind to say that such would be Mr. Perry's undoubted line of action if Johnny did not behave himself at school; but her heart relented at the frightened look of the child, and she hoped that Mr. Perry would not be quite so severe. Indeed, thinking that she might have gone too far, she proceeded to give him quite a glowing account of the beautiful place he was going to, and of the happy life he was to lead there.

"And when do we go, little mother?" asked Johnny.

"You go this day week," answered Mrs. Dorrien, looking at the fire.

"Don't you come with me?" he asked, in blank dismay.

"I can't, dear."

Johnny looked up in his mother's face, as if he could scarcely trust his ears. She had been so jealous of his personal safety that she had

rarely allowed him to go to the end of the street alone, and now she was sending him across the sea "all alone by himself," as Johnny said in his own thoughts. But even this solitary journey to a strange land was nothing to what followed.

"And shall I come back all alone, too, for the holidays?" asked Johnny, wistfully.

"I must try to go and see you for the holidays," answered his mother; but she looked at the fire again.

Johnny was truth itself; to tell no lies cost him no effort, and as he was, so he held all others to be. Words spoken by his mother especially were to him as certain realities as if they had been uttered by the fair Goddess who lives in a well; but if he was truthful and trusting, he was also singularly penetrating for so young a child, and he now looked at his mother in sore perplexity. She said that she must try to go and see him, and therefore that must be true; and yet Johnny knew that she had no intention of trying—that she would never come, and that his holidays were to be spent in solitude. He was too young to say

as much to himself in the clear speech which thought utters to us in our riper years, but he felt it, and the feeling it was that which brought to his face that earnest, perplexed look before which his mother shrank. Poor woman! she liked truth well enough, and, to do her justice, practised it nine times out of the ten; but when truth would be a stumbling-block in her path, why, she stepped aside, and asked of herself, "How could I help it?" Truth in the present case she considered one of these stumbling-blocks, and therefore she looked at the fire.

Johnny was much depressed, and his mother, not knowing how to cheer him, decreed, in her peremptory way, that he was cross and sleepy, and must go to bed. Johnny submitted; it never occurred to him to dispute her will. Accordingly the sofa was turned down, and Johnny, having said his prayers and undressed, was tucked in; but he could not sleep, and the look of his large brilliant eyes never left his mother. She came and stood over him, half fond, half reproving.

"I wonder where you get your eyes from?" she said, smiling down at his little pale face.

"They are not like mine—they are not like your father's. They are Irish eyes. I believe you had an Irish great-grandmother. I suppose the eyes came from her."

Johnny had no doubt on the subject, having heard his mother utter the above remark a hundred times, at least.

"Well, they are lovely eyes," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, with a sigh, "and clever eyes, too; and if you don't learn, Johnny, I shall always say the fault was yours."

"But I will learn—indeed I will, little mother," cried Johnny, with strong symptoms of forthcoming tears.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Dorrien—"go to sleep directly," and to enforce her commands by the aid of darkness, she carried away the lamp to the next room, where she at once busied herself in looking over Johnny's clothes. At first Johnny's mother saw very well that three little shirts were past mending, and that there was no cure to the frayed edges of two white collars; but after a while there came such a mist over her eyes that she saw nothing more. The natural grief which she had hidden and re-

pressed now overpowered her; her poor hands shook as she put away one of Johnny's silk neckties, and remembered that other hands than her own would have to settle and tie it round the neck of her boy for many a day to come—unless, indeed, as was most likely, his own little awkward hands were left to perform that office.

"Oh! how can I do without him?—how can I?" thought the poor mother, sinking down on a chair by the side of her bed, and burying her face in her pillow, that Johnny might not hear her sobbing. "I could be so happy alone with him in a desert. How can I let him go away from me? Must I let others nurse him when he is ill, and must I die, perhaps, and not see him again? My boy, my Johnny, all that is left to me out of my poor wasted life, how can I do it?"

Cruel, bitter question! But though Mrs. Dorrien was not a high-minded woman, she had, as we have already said, plenty of courage and energy. Grief and repining being utterly useless, she now bade them begone. Maternal ambition, the feeling that she was sacrificing

her own happiness for that of her darling, and a firm faith that, if she surrendered her child to the keeping of Providence, the trust would be redeemed, gave her strength to bear this sorrow. She raised her face from her pillow, she returned to the survey of Johnny's clothes, and when it was at length time for her to go to bed, she only allowed herself one indulgence—that of going to look at her sleeping boy.

But Johnny was not asleep; his bright eyes were open, his cheeks were flushed. "Little mother," he said, excitedly, "I will be a great scholar, I will indeed. And you need not be afraid of Mr. Perry, and I will earn plenty of money for you when I grow up and——"

"Hush, darling, you must sleep," soothingly said his mother.

She kissed him fondly, she sat down by his side, she took his little fevered hands in her own, she talked to him coaxingly, and little by little she led his thoughts away from the school and Mr. Perry.

"You were talking to me about Aladdin, were you not?" said Mrs. Dorrien. "What were you saying, Johnny?"

"Oh! little mother, I was saying that, if I had his lamp, I would rub and rub it till you should have heaps and heaps of gold, and——"

"There, that will do," interrupted Mrs. Dorrien, vexed to see the excited look coming back to his eyes, "I wish Mr. Perry had never given you that book. Shut your eyes and go to sleep, child. People can always fall asleep, if they will only shut their eyes."

Obedient Johnny closed his eyes, and was indeed very fast asleep ere long. But, alas! for Mrs. Dorrien's infallible recipe. In vain she tried its efficacy that night. Sleep came not to her until long after grey morning had stolen into her room.

CHAPTER II.

IT is bitter to linger over a parting, and there is no need for us to linger over this one. The week had gone by pitilessly swift in its course, thought Johnny's mother. She had worked night and day at his little outfit, she had drained her scanty resources almost dry, that he might want for nothing, and she had gone down to Newhaven to see him on board the steamer that was to bear him away, and commended him to the care of captain and steward, with a sharp sort of earnestness that plainly said: "You have nothing on board your boat so valuable as my boy." And having done this, Mrs. Dorrien had kissed Johnny, strictly forbidden him to cry, and left him to all appearance for the purpose of taking the train, and going straight home to Kensing-

ton, and there resuming that colouring of photographs which his departure had sadly interrupted. In reality, Mrs. Dorrien had retired to the gloom of a dingy corner of the station, and thence she watched the little solitary figure that stood on the deck, so little and so lonely in its plain grey suit, and with its leather bag strapped round its tiny body, the little figure and pale face that were all in all to her. She did not see them long. There was a great stir, a great confusion, and no little noise; then the steamer glided away, and when it could be seen no more, even by her straining eyes, Mrs. Dorrien took the train, and went home—if that place whence her boy was gone could be called home now. Sadly and silently, with her veil down, she went home, a lonely, childless mother.

Never in all the ten years of his little life, had Johnny felt so forlorn, as he felt when he found himself standing alone on the deck of the boat, that was bearing him away to a strange country. He did not cry, he had promised his mother that he would not, and the somewhat severe discipline to which Mrs.

Dorrien had subjected him, had done him this much good, that he could restrain the manifestation of his feelings; but he looked around him slowly and wistfully, with that gravity of aspect which is so remarkable an attribute of childhood.

Mrs. Dorrien little suspected that by thus sending her boy adrift she had in a great measure shaken the very foundations of his moral world. Johnny had not been a spoiled child, nor yet an indulged one; but he had been cared for, and watched over, as spoiled and pampered children are not always. Mrs. Dorrien washed him, combed him, dressed and undressed him, with her own hands. She learned Latin to teach it to him, no book ever met his eyes without first being read by her, and no child was allowed to say a word to Johnny until Mrs. Dorrien had sifted him thoroughly, and, as she said herself, "turned him inside out." Johnny did not grow up very like his mother, in mind or in temper, for all that, but he grew up in blind reliance on her superior wisdom and judgment. And now she had left him, nay, she had sent him forth, and Johnny felt in the

condition of a fledgling whom the parent bird has just turned out of the nest. He did not say in thought that he must rely on himself alone for the future, but such was his feeling; and as Johnny, though quick and susceptible, did not belong to the tribe of the weak, but to that of the strong, on that feeling he was to act henceforth. The bond, the great bond between him and his mother, was really broken from that hour of their first parting. To his dying day he loved her fondly, but he never gave her back the authority she had relinquished by sending him amongst strangers.

Of this great change Johnny was so far conscious that, even whilst he looked about him with the keen, observant looks of childhood, he could not forget it. He saw the mighty waste of waters, the boats that glided along or shot across it, the spars of the shipping; he heard weird cries, strange sounds, and listened with horror to profane oaths, and all the time he also remembered his irresponsible position with a sort of awe, and was only amazed to see that other people did not seem to think anything at all about it. Was the world really the same

as it had been, now that he, Mrs. Dorrien's little boy, instead of sitting alone in their room on the second floor of the house in Kensington, studying Latin in L'Homond's grammar, or reading about Aladdin, was standing on that narrow deck alone, and looking about him with not a soul, so far as it appeared, to watch or control his actions. His mother, indeed, had commended him to a gentleman with a laced cap and a red nose, and, informing him that this was the Captain, she had added, in her strict, imperative fashion,

"Mind you obey him, Johnny."

So when the boat was fairly on her way, and Johnny's drooping spirits so far revived that he felt hungry, he sidled up to that gentleman, and said, in his little shy voice, which was also a very sweet one,

"Please, sir, may I eat a biscuit now?"

"What?" said the red-nosed gentleman, staring down at him.

"Please, sir, may I eat a biscuit now?" reiterated Johnny.

"Yes, yes; go and ask the steward to give you one," was the hasty reply, for the Captain

had just raised his glass, and was looking through it.

"Oh! but I have got them in my leather bag," said Johnny—"seven Abernethy biscuits."

"Oh! you have them in your bag, have you?" said the Captain, without removing his glass from his right eye—the left one was shut very tightly. "Then, in the name of patience, what do you want *me* to do for you?"

"Please may I eat one?"

"Eat the whole lot of them, if you like, my man," replied the Captain, with profound indifference.

Johnny became very red, and drew away abashed. He saw that he bored the Captain, and he felt that he must trouble him no more. But he also saw, and he could scarcely realise the awful fact, that he had entered a world where little boys could eat up seven Abernethy biscuits unchecked, unscolded, and—uncared for. Why, at that rate, there was no enormity which he, Johnny, Mrs. Dorrien's little boy, could not venture on now! He might tear his clothes, or spend his pocket-money, two shillings and sixpence, or buy and

smoke cigars, or do any other of the immoral actions condemned in the decalogue of boyhood, and who would care or interfere? Not the Captain! And this was what he had come to, he, Johnny, who had never walked five minutes alone in the streets of Kensington, he who, even in the pleasant Kensington Gardens, had never been out of the reach of his mother's watchful black eye! Truly the world was an altered world since that morning sun had risen!

The conclusion of these philosophical reflections was that Johnny opened his leather bag, took out the other paper bag, in which his seven biscuits had been deposited by his careful mother, and instead of one biscuit, ate two. For, since he was to bear the burden, Johnny thought he might as well have the advantages of irresponsibility.

"All right now?" said the Captain, nodding to him, and without waiting for an answer, he walked on.

The steward also gave Johnny a look, then the stewardess came and said a few words, then he was once more alone. The boat was out at sea now, land had vanished, a mild hazy sky

bent over the smooth green waters, and long-winged white sea-birds flew screaming above them. Every poem, every tale, every history Johnny had read now came back to him, and fired his little brain. Wicked sailors shooting holy albatrosses; brave young heroes crossing seas on romantic quests; noble Christopher Columbuses seeking new worlds—all were with him then, and somehow or other he was one and all of them. He had killed the albatross with his crossbow; he was sailing in that huge boat, with its sails out, and its chimney smoking, in order to seek his fortune; and, above all, he was going to discover America with all his might, and to be carried in triumph by rebellious, penitent sailors, who wore low hats, and blue jackets, and flat collars, and the chief rebel of whom had a laced cap and a red nose.

Though Johnny, who had lived much alone, and thus become a great dreamer, indulged himself in these fancies, he found time and attention to bestow on his fellow-passengers. There was an old lady, who looked very poorly, he thought; then there were two tall men, who did nothing but walk up and down the deck,

talking all the time; then there were three little children, who were either screaming or romping or tumbling about everybody's legs; and then there was a lad of twelve or thirteen, with whom Johnny fell in love at once. He was a handsome boy, with long dark locks, soft and laughing dark eyes, and a bewitching countenance. But perhaps the rich black velvet tunic which he wore fascinated Johnny as much as his beauty. "He must be a prince at the very least," thought the child, "to be so magnificently attired," And he watched him furtively, and the more he looked at this beautiful stranger, the more was Johnny smitten. He liked everything about him—the fashion in which he stood or sat or talked or laughed, showing teeth of pearl, was perfection in Johnny's eyes. And then he had such little white hands, like a girl's, and such dainty feet, in such wonderful little boots. He must be a Prince. The Prince was not alone. A handsome white-haired, white-bearded man, with a jovial face, accompanied him, and watched Johnny's looks with great amusement. "Do you know that little fellow, Oliver?" he asked.

Oliver—such was the Prince's name—turned his laughing dark eyes rather languidly towards Johnny, and answered softly that he did not know the funny little chap.

"He is a funny little chap," resumed the white-haired gentleman, whose name was Blackmore, and who was the Prince's papa; "and what is more, he cannot take his eyes off you."

"Can't he?" said Oliver, still speaking softly, but looking by no means surprised or elated. "Well, his looks don't hurt me," he composedly added, and giving Johnny a careless glance, he turned back to a distant contemplation of the man at the helm, which Mr. Blackmore's observations had interrupted.

Johnny, however, having become conscious that the white-haired and white-bearded gentleman was watching him, had suddenly withdrawn his looks from the Prince, and bestowed them on the sea. He was not thinking about it, to say the truth, he was wondering if this beautiful creature in black velvet was bound, like himself, for Saint Ives, and fondly hoping that such might be the case. He was already—

being of an imaginative turn—constructing a pleasant romance on that slight foundation, when a voice at his elbow said,

"Well, and what do you think about it?"

It was Mr. Blackmore who spoke. Johnny started and blushed.

"About what, sir?" he asked.

"Why, about the sea that you are staring at so."

"I thought it was bigger," answered Johnny.

"Bigger!—you thought it was bigger! Had you never seen it before?"

No, Johnny had never seen the sea before, and he had thought it was bigger. He said it very simply, and without the least wish of being censorious, for all that Mr. Blackmore measured this mite of a thing from head to foot, burst out laughing, then addressing the beautiful Oliver, who stood by his side, looking down benignantly at Johnny, he said gaily,

"IT thought the sea was bigger. What do *you* think of that, Oliver?"

But Oliver was too amiable to say what he thought, so he only smiled and showed his beautiful little teeth.

"That boy has the most extraordinary eyes for a child," resumed Mr. Blackmore.

"They are Irish eyes," promptly remarked Johnny—"my mother says so."

He was rather proud of his Irish eyes, though wholly innocent of attaching any personal value to them. Mr. Blackmore laughed again, and even Oliver looked amused.

"And do you really travel all alone?" resumed Mr. Blackmore, looking down with a careless sort of pity on the little grey figure sitting on the bench before him, with its pale, eager face turned up, and its short legs dangling helplessly. Yes, Johnny travelled all alone.

"And are you not afraid to go alone to France?"

"Oh! no. I am to wait on deck till the man comes for me."

"Like a parcel to be called for," said Mr. Blackmore, winking shrewdly.

Johnny coloured up to the roots of his brown hair, and Mr. Blackmore went on with his catechising.

Was Johnny going to Dieppe? No. Then how far beyond Dieppe was he going?

"I am going to the great school of St. Ives," replied Johnny, proudly—for he began to think that this old gentleman was a very inquisitive one.

The amused expression died out of Mr. Blackmore's face, and even Oliver's rather languid countenance became suddenly interested as Johnny uttered the words "St. Ives." Father and son exchanged a look; they both gazed down at Johnny's little insignificant figure. Then Oliver coloured faintly, and Mr. Blackmore whistled and said,

"Well done! So nothing less than St. Ives will answer you? No wonder you do not think the sea big enough."

Like all truthful children, Johnny was very simple; but spite his simplicity, he had an almost feminine quickness of perception, which often made clear to him many things beyond either his knowledge or his experience. In a moment it now seemed to be revealed to him that the young Prince in black velvet was one of those unfortunate pupils who had been turned out of Saint Ives; and this was so far true that the head of that establishment had, after giving

the handsome Oliver a year's trial, advised his father to place him under other tuition.

"It was Mr. Perry who got me in," said Johnny, a little deprecatingly, and as if he thought it needful to apologise for his overweening ambition.

"Mr. Perry! What Mr. Perry?"

And when Johnny in his innocence supplied the needful information, and Mr. Perry turned out to be a photographer in London, Mr. Blackmore smiled sceptically; but being too well-bred a man to contradict even a child, he only smiled, and, having had enough of Johnny by this, he walked to the other end of the deck, followed by his son.

"I say," said Oliver, laughing in his sweet, low voice, "just fancy that little soft chap thinking Mr. Perry got him into Saint Ives."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Blackmore, good-humouredly, "it matters very little how that small boy gets in. The great thing is, not to get out of Saint Ives as you did. Mark my words, that boy will stay."

"I should not wonder if he did," replied Oliver, looking wholly unmoved by the paternal

censure. "I must go and have a talk with him."

Johnny, who had seen the Prince depart with a pang of regret, now saw him return with a throb of shy joy. And nothing could be pleasanter and more winning than Oliver Blackmore's mode of beginning an acquaintance. It might be slightly patronising, but Johnny did not detect that.

"My name is Oliver Blackmore," said he, sitting down by Johnny's side, and drawing up one of his legs to nurse it with graceful familiarity. "We have a château three leagues north of Saint Ives—such a big place! They call it La Maison Rouge. My father bought it for the sake of the fishing; for there is a little river thick with fish that flows through our grounds. And I have a boat of my own, and when you can get a holiday out of the Abbé, why, you must come and see me, and I will take you in my boat, you know. And won't it be jolly!" added Master Oliver Blackmore, shaking his dark curls, and laughing with all the might of his laughing dark eyes in Johnny's face.

Jolly! Johnny was overpowered by the

vision of bliss thus held forth, and could scarcely stammer out his glad thanks.

"And since you are going to Saint Ives," continued Oliver, "please to give my best regards to Mr. Ryan. He is the dearest old brick you ever saw—an Irishman—and such a brick! He teaches English at the Abbé's. And also will you tell Madame Blanc, the *concierge*—that's the door-keeper, you know—that I kiss her on both cheeks. She was very fond of me, was Madame Blanc. For I was at Saint Ives, you know; but they worked too hard there for me, I did not like it; and so my father brought me home, and Mr. Granby undertook me. He says I get on very well. You will like Mr. Granby, and he will give you some good hints, if I ask him. We have also the housekeeper's room at the château—I mean the jam room. Do you like apricot jam?"

Johnny modestly confessed that he was not acquainted with that dainty.

"Ain't you? Well, we have lots of it; and you can eat a whole pot, if you like. And now," negligently continued Oliver, leaning back, and so nursing his knee that he seemed

inclined to suck it, "what's your name, and who are you?"

Johnny told him very simply the little there was to tell about himself. He was Johnny Dorrien, Mrs. Dorrien's little boy, and his father was dead, and he was going to Saint Ives to work hard and be a great scholar, and it was Mr. Perry who had got him in.

"Now don't be green," said Oliver, laughing and looking amused. "No one gets in that way at Saint Ives. The old Abbé is too sharp for that. Now confess that he had a talk with you, and examined you, and made you go through your paces. I know he trotted me out finely."

"But I never saw him," replied Johnny, colouring up, and a little indignant to find his word doubted.

"Well, if you won't tell, you know, you won't," said Oliver, very coolly.

Johnny was ready to cry with mortification. Oliver stared at these signs of emotion, and so far relented in his scepticism as to remark that, if the Abbé had not already examined Johnny, he certainly would do so, as he never took any

one upon trust, and that he, Johnny, had better be prepared to go through a trying ordeal. But if Master Oliver Blackmore thought to appal Mrs. Dorrien's little boy by this awful prospect, he was wholly mistaken. Johnny's grey eyes sparkled, his little turned-up nose sniffed at the thought of the encounter with the Abbé, and his ambitious little heart swelled within him.

"That's right. I see you are game. I was," said Oliver, with an approving nod. "The old Abbé poked me about—oh! I don't mean that he actually poked me," for Johnny had stared, "I mean that he tried to get me into a corner—well, I don't mean a real corner, you know—but you know what I mean," a little impatiently ejaculated Oliver, getting entangled in his own figures of speech; "and, though he did his best, I was game, and got through it. But I could not stand the work; it made my head ache."

"Oliver!" called Mr. Blackmore, from the other end of the deck, "come here."

"So, as I said," continued Oliver, without heeding this summons, "he will try and put you all wrong, and if he does he will pack you off home. But I'll tell you what you'll do if he

does that; you'll come to me first, and——"

"Oliver!" called Mr. Blackmore again.

"And we'll have a jolly row in my boat," continued the imperturbable Oliver, "and Mr. Granby——"

"Oliver, are you coming?" called Mr. Blackmore a third time; and his voice was so angry that Oliver raised his eyebrows, and with the remark, "He's growling, I must go now," left Johnny to his reflections.

Mr. Blackmore, who was a passionate man, swore as Oliver came up to him.

"How dare you stay when I called you three times?" he asked, his angry eyes flashing.

Oliver, all innocence, protested that he had not heard himself called more than once.

"That's not true," said Mr. Blackmore, point-blank.

Oliver's calmness was not disturbed. There was nothing defiant, insolent, or audacious in his sweet face as his father thus taunted him with a lie, but calmness there was, the calmness of a nature which neither praise nor censure can reach.

"The little boy's name is John Dorrien," he

said, after a pause. "His father is dead, and his mother colours photographs, and he is to come and see me."

Mr. Blackmore, who had had enough of the little boy, bade Oliver not bother; whereupon Oliver looked languidly at the sea, and spoke no more.

We said that Johnny was left to his reflections. These were brief. The stewardess came and pounced upon him, and took him down to feed him; then, somehow or other, he was smuggled into the ladies' cabin, and there a lady would make him take brandy and water to prevent sea-sickness, of which Johnny showed no symptoms; and the result of the above dose thus administered was that Johnny fell into a sudden and profound sleep.

When he woke, the boat was still, a dull light was burning in the ladies' cabin, and the ladies were all gone save one, who, with the recent despair of sea-sickness still written on her face, was putting on her bonnet before the looking-glass.

"Please, ma'am, are we in?" asked Johnny.

"Oh, yes, we are in," answered the lady,

despondently; "but I am always ill for three days after being in, so it don't matter."

Johnny did not know how to construe this gloomy speech; he ventured, however, on another question.

"And do you know, ma'am, if anyone has come for me? I am to be called for."

"My dear," answered the lady, "my poor head aches so that I can't say a word. It's distraction to look at myself and tie my bonnet-strings; and I wish, I do, that Adam and Eve were at the bottom of the sea. It stands to reason that if it were not for them and original sin there would be no such thing as sea-sickness."

It was plain that this lady was in no frame of mind to give Johnny the desired information, even if she possessed it, which he doubted. He began to feel nervous. Suppose the man had come for him, and not finding him, had gone away without him! Johnny's heart sank with fear at the thought, and he crept upstairs as fast as he could. The night was cold, and the child shivered as he reached the deck, and stood there looking about him. A few faint stars

shone in a black sky, and a great many lights twinkled in the town and harbour. There was also, and Johnny was aware of it, a sound of foreign speech as unlike Johnny's French as if it had been Hindustanee; but the anxious boy only thought of the man who was to come and fetch him, and seeing a dark form by the gangway, he went up to it, and whispered timidly,

"Please, sir, are you the man who is to come and fetch me? I am Mrs. Dorrien's little boy."

The dark form turned round, and Mr. Blackmore's voice answered,

"What, haven't they come for the little parcel yet? Never mind, they will be sure to come, unless they forget it."

And with this piece of comfort, Mr. Blackmore walked away. He was not an unkind man, but he had just discovered that part of his luggage had remained behind, and the discovery had tried his temper. Johnny stood where he had left him. He felt cold and dismayed. Suppose the man should forget to call for him.

"Well, then," thought Johnny, rallying, and trying to feel stout and brave, "I'll walk to

Saint Ives. I can speak French, and ask my way, and——"

"Confound that boy," said a gruff voice, "where can he have gone to?"

"Please, sir," said Johnny, softly, "is it me you want?"

"There he is," exclaimed the man, without answering the question. "You have got his traps, have you?"

Another man's voice answered something in French, which Johnny could not understand; then that second speaker came and took his hand. The boy looked up at him; he saw that this man had rather a coarse red face, and that, though decently clad, he was not a gentleman.

"*Par ici*," he said, in French. Johnny followed in mute obedience. He felt very like parcel, after all.

CHAPTER III.

THE dark city, the spectral-looking port, the flickering gaslights on the long, lonely quays, remained for ever after like a dream in Johnny's memory, too vivid not to have had some sort of existence, too unreal to be true. But reality returned with an omnibus, into which he was hoisted, and where he found himself alone, the man having gone outside to smoke. Johnny crept to the farthest corner, and ensconced himself there. Ah! if his mother could have seen her boy in his little grey suit, with his small, useless hands, that could do so little for him yet in the hard battle of life, thrust into his pockets, and his tired, anxious face vainly peering out of the window into the darkness of the night, and the strangeness of an unknown land! If she could have seen

him, surely her heart would have ached for his loneliness.

All that Johnny could see at first of the country through which they were driving was that it was very desolate-looking. Then, when a chill breeze came from the sea, and the moon rose and shone in a stormy sky, he saw with awe the darkness of thick clouds hanging over the low, flat land. Once a tall windmill rose black and gaunt above the plain, with its sails spread to the wind; low down near it a glow-worm-light glimmered in the window of a little cottage. A narrow stream glided silently in the darkness, with here and there a streak of silver upon it, and a flock of sheep, unheeding night, or the coming storm of the threatening clouds, were grazing quietly close by; but the picture was gone almost as soon as seen, and the long stretch of wood, with gaunt trees and scarce houses, followed in dreary monotony.

At length, and when Johnny thought that the omnibus would never stop, it stood suddenly still; the door opened, and the man looked in.

"Hi!" he said, nodding.

The boy alighted, the man took his hand

again, the omnibus drove away with a great jingling of bells, and the two walked on together in the darkness of a lonely lane, till they came to a wide iron gate, with tall trees nodding above the wall. The earth, still sodden with recent rains, was also strown with fallen leaves; the air felt damp and chill, and Johnny shivered, yet he was not cold. His heart beat, his pulses throbbed, his blood was on fire with excitement, fear, and hope. It was as in one of the old stories which the boy loved so well. The little knight stood at the castle gate, and knew not what awaited him within—defeat or victory, glory or shame. A bell rang with a great clangour, then a light flashed through the iron bars, and a fresh-coloured woman opened a little door in the great gate. Scarcely had the two entered when a tall, thin, dark man appeared.

"Are you John Dorrien?" he asked, stooping a little to see the child, and speaking in English.

Johnny answered that he was, then suddenly he added, looking up in the somewhat saturnine face of the speaker,

"Please, sir, are you Mr. Ryan?"

"And how do you know my name?" asked Mr. Ryan, taken by surprise.

"I travelled with Oliver Blackmore, and he told me to give you his best regards," answered Johnny, with a touch of consequence.

"Did he, the dear boy!" cried Mr. Ryan, whose dark face at once beamed like sunshine. "And how did he look?"

"He looked very well; but, please, sir, is that woman Madame Blanc?—because, if she is, Oliver Blackmore told me that he kissed her on both cheeks.

Mr. Ryan turned to Madame Blanc, and translated John Dorrien's message. She received it with voluble delight, but all Johnny understood of her discourse was the word "*ange*," several times repeated.

"And now, come with me, my lad," said Mr. Ryan, addressing Johnny. "This way—don't fall."

The admonition came too late. Johnny had stumbled and fallen over the first step of a *perron* that led to a large house. It was almost invisible; the trees that grew round it were high, and darkness had come back to the sky.

The moon had left it once more for her palace of huge black clouds, and would not return and shine upon earth again.

"Not hurt, eh?" said Mr. Ryan, picking up Johnny. "Never mind; you are no Roman, and will not think it ill-luck, will you? Besides, you will have many a stumble before you leave us, will you not, my lad?"

"I hope not," replied Johnny, quickly.

"What, you don't mean to stumble, do you?"

"No, sir," answered the boy, stoutly, "I don't mean it."

Mr. Ryan whistled, then laughed, a low, amused, chuckling laugh.

"Not if I can help it," added Johnny, fearing he had been presumptuous, and looking up at his companion's swarthy face; but Mr. Ryan only laughed again.

They stood in a wide stone hall, cold and gloomy, a staircase before them, a tall door on their right hand. At this door Mr. Ryan gave a low premonitory knock, then opened it, and gently pushed Johnny into a large and lofty room. How it was furnished, whether its aspect was dreary or pleasant, Johnny knew not.

His eyes were riveted on a bald man in a black cassock, who sat reading at a desk at the further end of the apartment, with the light of a little lamp shining on his pale, austere face. No soul waiting for judgment ever looked at Rhadamanthus with more awe than Johnny now looked at the Abbé Véran, the head of the great school of Saint Ives.

The Abbé slowly raised his eyes from his book, and without giving Mr. Ryan a glance, he fastened them at once on the boy—at least, Johnny felt as if those eyes, which had nothing remarkable in them save the intensity of their gaze, pinned him in some sort. He was not frightened, and they were not, indeed, unkind eyes, but he felt a strange fascination which compelled him to meet that long, fixed look. The Abbé said something in French.

"Sit down, my lad," said Mr. Ryan, who threw himself, with a look of perfect unconcern, on a leather chair, and thrusting his hands in his pockets, assumed the cool attitude of a spectator; at least, so thought Johnny, when, climbing up on what seemed the highest chair on which he had ever sat, he girt himself, so to

speak, for the coming encounter. The Abbé leaned a little forward, and almost smiled as he looked at the boy before him. He was such a little fellow, and his little pale face, with his large eyes and sharp chin, looked so eager and resolute. Mr. Ryan, too, who was leaning back in his chair, with his head a little bent forward, also looked at Johnny curiously, like one who had not seen him before, and who found that childish face worth the reading. Meanwhile, Johnny was going mentally through his Latin grammar, from the *Rosa* down to the *imum mare* of old L'Homond.

But there was no need for such preparations. That sea was not to be sounded on this evening. The Abbé intended nothing so formidable for this first interview, at least. He opened his desk, took out from it a paper folded like a letter, and gave it to Mr. Ryan, who handed it to Johnny, saying,

"Do you know this?"

Johnny became crimson, and his grey eyes sparkled like diamonds as he replied, excitedly,

"I wrote it. It is a letter to mamma on her birthday. I wrote it in Latin—I did."

"You did," repeated Mr. Ryan, in amused mimicry. "Well, then, we don't know Latin, so just translate it for us into French—into English, I mean, and I shall put it into French for the Abbé."

"But I could put it into French myself—I could," said ambitious Johnny. "I know French, I do."

"Oh! you do?" repeated Mr. Ryan. "What sort of French, I wonder? Never mind, fire away."

And so Johnny, with the two men looking at him, with his heart beating, and his temples throbbing, with his whole being undergoing the strain of a young race-horse who pants to reach the goal—so Johnny, we say, translated into French the Latin letter which he had concocted alone for his mother's eyes, and which she had sent as his best credentials to the Abbé. Once or twice the priest's grave face relaxed at Johnny's French; but the translation was a correct one, and proved what he wanted to know—that Johnny had really and truly written that letter. The composition would have been child's play to a boy regularly trained, but it

spoke well for the abilities of one who had had no better teaching than poor Mrs. Dorrien's. Mr. Ryan looked at the Abbé and nodded, and the Abbé nodded in return, and said a few words.

"There, we may go now," said Mr. Ryan to Johnny.

The boy rose with a perplexed look.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"To be sure it is—what more do you want?"

Johnny gave a wistful look at the silent Abbé, whose eyes followed him out, as they had greeted him in, and walked after Mr. Ryan. He felt disappointed. He had expected a trying examination, and after it triumph and praise; whereas the examination had been a joke, and praise seemed to be as much out of the question as triumph.

"What did he say? I mean the Abbé?" he could not help asking of his companion as the door closed upon them.

"Say! Why, you do not suppose that the Abbé had anything to say about you!"

Johnny had supposed it, and was crestfallen at being mistaken.

"I'll tell you what, my boy," resumed Mr. Ryan, "if your bump of love of approbation is a large one, it will starve here, so far as Monsieur l'Abbé goes. He *never* praises. What he did say was that you were to have some supper, and to go to bed directly."

He took Johnny to the refectory, a lofty bare room, where he ate alone, Mr. Ryan, however, looking on with evident interest. He sat back on a form, his long legs stretched out, his dark head leaning against the blank-looking wall, and his hands thrust deep in his pockets, with what Johnny could not help thinking a very rakish air.

"That's your supper," said he, "bread, cold meat, an apple, and plenty of abondance. Abondance, if you don't know it, is a little wine and a great deal of water. No stint of it, such as it is; nor of bread either; meat, limited supply."

"Please, sir," remarked Johnny, fastening his brilliant grey eyes on the English teacher's dark face, "shall I soon begin Greek?"

"And what do you want with Greek?" asked Mr. Ryan, with a stare.

"I want to read Homer," replied ambitious Johnny.

"And what have you got to do with Homer, *I* should like to know?"

"My father read Homer," said Johnny, a little proudly.

"My father made shoes, and I wish he had not set me to Greek and Latin," replied Mr. Ryan, drily; "a little learning and no cash don't go far now-a-days."

He gave his feet a philosophic stare, and Johnny, looking at them shyly, was afraid that they were not very well shod.

"He's like cousin Mary," thought Mr. Ryan, looking at the boy; "he has got her eyes." And he half-sighed, for those grey eyes, so sweet, so dark, so deep and brilliant once, those eyes which Mr. Ryan had liked so well in the bygone days of his Irish home, though they often tormented him sadly, had long been closed in the calm sleep of death, and could vex and bless him no more.

"Homer!—you want to read Homer!" he resumed. Then, with a sudden twinkle in his eye, "I suppose you write verses?"

Johnny blushed dreadfully. Even his mother had not fathomed that awful secret.

"Come, let us hear them," said Mr. Ryan with cool authority. His father had made shoes, and every boy in the school knew it, but not one of those boys had ever dared to fail him in respect or to dispute his slightest wish. It did not now occur to Johnny to resist Mr. Ryan's behest. In great trepidation he began:

"The lady waited at the gate—"

"Why so?" inquired Mr. Ryan, "could not she get in?"

Johnny, though rather disturbed, continued:

"The stars were shining in the sky."

"And where in the name of common sense would you have them shine?" asked Mr. Ryan with a stare.

The susceptibility of the poetic temperament revolted at the heartless question. This first sample criticism was too much for Johnny's equanimity. He did not cry, because he would not, but the little mobile mouth quivered, and the grey eyes deepened in the intensity of their gaze. In vain Mr. Ryan said "Go on." Not another word could Johnny utter. "Ah! I suppose I have

stopped you," remarked Mr. Ryan coolly. "Never mind, my boy. You'll read Homer yet; and, what's more, there's a look of John Milton about that head of yours, with the wavy hair and broad white forehead and grey eyes."

"My name is John Dorrien," said Johnny, his light spirits rising at once.

"That's right; now finish your abondance and go to bed."

In the dormitory Johnny was surrendered to the care of the man who had fetched him from the steamer. He gazed shyly around him. He only saw little iron bedsteads, and here and there sleepy eyes looking at him winkingly. Near his own bed he found his luggage, concerning which he had had many uneasy thoughts since he had left the steamer. As well as he might he undressed himself alone, with his little awkward unaccustomed hands, said his prayers, then crept into his cot. He long lay there awake, listening to the snoring of the boy next him, and looking at the lamp which burned dimly nigh the great black cross at the end of the long narrow room.

"You will have your crosses to bear," had said his mother to Johnny, on the last evening

they had spent together; "remember that your Lord bore His."

Johnny remembered it now as he looked at that black cross. He had been reared religiously, and the wonderful story of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Galilee was very dear to him. He had trembled with awe at the miracles, he had sobbed with sorrow over the agony; and he had loved, with all his childish heart, that Son of Man who loved man so well that He had become a little child for his sake. He thought of Him now, his Father, his God, his Friend, and he made brave resolves that with His help he would be very good and work very hard at Saint Ives. Johnny thought of his mother too, and of the sea, which seemed bigger in his recollection than it had seemed in reality; of Oliver Blackmore, who was so beautiful in black velvet; of that dark-eyed Mr. Ryan, who thought him like John Milton; of the Abbé, who never praised one—then suddenly he was fast asleep. But poor Mrs. Dorrien did not sleep that night. For alas! she knew, what Johnny only suspected, that days must lengthen into weeks, and weeks into months and years, before she could see her boy's face again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE August sky stooped over the hot landscape. The trees looked heavy with sleep; the birds were hushed, there was no breath of air, no low murmur of flowing water throughout the silent land; the very cows that stood in the pasture forgot to graze, and stared straight before them with large drowsy eyes.

Nowhere did the sultry day brood more heavily than over Saint Ives. These were the holidays, and the old house was deserted. The pupils had flown. The Professors were gone or going. The tall trees which grew round the building cast their broad shadow over the empty playground. The sun looked in at the windows of the school-room, and poured a broad flood of light over the vacant forms and ink-stained desks. A spell seemed laid upon the place, and

silence, dust, and cobwebs were to reign supreme for weeks to come.

"John," said Mr. Ryan, as they walked side by side in the lime-tree ally, which divided the play-ground of the pupils from the little grass-grown garden of the Abbé Véran, "John, how many years is it since you came to us?"

"Seven years next October, Mr. Ryan," answered John; "but can it really be seven years?"

He stood still to reckon. If he could have looked at himself as he stood in the Summer light, John would not have wondered that seven years had come and gone since he first entered the walls of Saint Ives. Mrs. Dorrien's little boy was now a tall, well-built young man of seventeen, who looked twenty. His brown hair still curled around his clear white forehead, and his deep grey eyes still had their old beauty. They were large, brilliant, and thoughtful. He could have been described by them, and recognised by the description, but Mrs. Dorrien herself would scarcely have known her boy's little pale face in that intellectual countenance of mingled brightness and refinement; for though the

youth was not handsomer than had been the child, his mobile features being too irregular for beauty, the sharp quaintness was gone from them, and a passionate ardent meaning had come in its stead.

"Yes, it is really seven years," said John Dorrien, looking at Mr. Ryan, whose hair had turned iron-grey, and who was also sallower and thinner than of yore. "Would you have thought it was so long, Mr. Ryan?"

Mr. Ryan, who had been to Ireland in the year of John Dorrien's coming, who had not been there since, and who was going there now —being, indeed, ready dressed for the journey, —sighed, and shook his heavy grey locks at the lad.

"Why, you boy," he said, "I thought it was ten years. I thought it was ages. But never mind that; let's sit down. And now let me hear these verses of yours again. 'Red glows the East,' you know."

He threw himself on a stone bench, folded his arms, rested his head against the trunk of a lime-tree, and closed his eyes; whilst John, sitting by him, began in a clear voice, which had kept up all its early music:

"'Red glows the East, as though some smouldering fire
Behind the darkness of those hills had burned
Since eve. From earth's broad hearth to highest sky
Springs up the kindling flame; the mountains all
Have caught the signal. Fast from peak to peak
And land to land it flies, and tidings tells
Of joyous vict'ry won o'er dismal night.'"

Here John paused, and Mr. Ryan opened his eyes with an interrogative "Well?"

"I forget what comes next."

"You don't forget Miriam's address to the sun, I am sure," said Mr. Ryan. "Let us have it."

Nothing loth, John resumed:

"'Swift traveller o'er many a land:
Oh! might I but depart with thee at dawn;
At eve return, then o'er yon Western ridge,
Watch thee go down, on some fresh journey bent,
Ardent as in thy morn. For breathing time
Thou askest not, unwearied journeyer;
Light, hours, and clime dispensing in thy path.
Thus in the East, that knew thee not till then
Didst thou dawn o'er the new-created earth,
Still sleeping green and silent in the shade,
Or yellow, like some glittering coin of gold,
First stamped with image of a mighty king,—
From gloomy depths of chaos didst thou rise,
Filling void space with ever-spreading light.'"

John paused, and Mr. Ryan, giving his

heavy head of hair a shake, said, in a low, emphatic voice,

"John, I told you when you came that you had a look of John Milton about the forehead; well, then, there is nothing finer in John Milton than in what John Dorrien has just repeated to me."

From which sweeping assertion, which brought a modest blush to the lad's cheek, it will be seen that Mr. Ryan was no longer a critic, but a devotee. His worship, indeed, was uncompromising. He was thirty-seven, and believed every word he said—no wonder that John, who was seventeen, believed every word of it too. He had within him that strong consciousness of talent which is so great a deluder of youth, for, until experience and judgment have come to the rescue, how is a lad, with great intellectual gifts, to know that he is not a genius?

"Miriam the Jewess will be a fine thing—a grand thing! And when you are a great man, my boy, and the world worships you, you will remember that William Ryan first discovered that you were a genius, and first foretold your fame."

John Dorrien laughed, but his eyes sparkled with more than laughter.

"That scene between Miriam and the chamois-hunter," resumed Mr. Ryan, "is simply magnificent. The young Nun is lovely, and the Hermit is fine—fine, sir. And now I must be gone—really gone," said Mr. Ryan, starting up and looking at his watch; "and Oliver Blackmore has not come, after all."

His face fell as he said it, and John looked awkward.

"Something must have prevented him from coming," said Mr. Ryan, meditatively; "but perhaps he is at the station," he added, brightening up at the thought. "Let us be off, John."

Saint Ives was now connected by a railway with Dieppe and Paris, and to the station, which was only a mile off, Mr. Ryan and John Dorrien walked under the hot August sun, John carrying Mr. Ryan's carpet-bag, and Mr. Ryan expatiating on the delight and honour of having his carpet-bag carried by a poet. He also kept looking out for Oliver Blackmore, feeling sure the dear boy would not break his appointment. But neither on the road nor at the station was the dear boy to be seen, and Mr. Ryan's face fell, and disappointment was written in his whole

aspect, as it became almost certain that the train would come in before Oliver appeared.

"I hope nothing unpleasant has kept him back," he said, musingly.

"I hope not," answered John. "I hear the signal, Mr. Ryan."

"John!"

"Yes, Mr. Ryan."

"I think you must touch up the Hermit a bit. He has been an old soldier, you know. Well, the two characters——"

"Here's the train," said John.

The black mass was coming up, puffing and steaming; it slackened its speed, it stopped. The two or three passengers who were waiting under the shed where Mr. Ryan and John were talking, hurried forward, lest there should be no room for them in the long line of carriages; but Mr. Ryan lingered, and laying his hand on John Dorrien's shoulder, he looked long and earnestly in the youth's face.

"God bless your handsome eyes!" said he.

John laughed, much amused.

"Why, Mr. Ryan," said he, "what can there be in my eyes that you are always praising them?"

"Good-bye," was Mr. Ryan's only answer. He had never told John why he liked those grey eyes of his, and he never would tell him. They were his poem, the poem of his youth and of his first love—a poem fairer and more pathetic than John's Miriam the Jewess, though Mr. Ryan himself did not know it. He caught up his carpet-bag, and jumped into the first railway-carriage. Scarcely was he in when the train began to move. At once he thrust his head out of the window, and nodding to John, who stood looking on, he said emphatically:

"Remember about the Hermit."

John smiled brightly. The train moved on, slowly at first, then with a quicker pace. Swiftly it went by, then vanished in the sunlit landscape, speeding on to Paris; for before revisiting Green Erin Mr. Ryan meant to have a look at Lutetia.

John was spending his holidays at Mr. Blackmore's, and towards that gentleman's abode, fully nine miles off, he now walked bravely in the hot August sun. There was not a cloud in the Summer sky. The sea shone far away like a sheet of glass, the very air felt burning; and, though

John tried to think of the Hermit, the only conclusion he came to concerning that venerable person was that he lived in a cool mountain-cell, and that he, John, wished he were with him. Suddenly he remembered that by taking a path to his left he should lengthen his road a mile or so, but that he should also get the most delightful shade. He cut across a field of yellow stubble, climbed a bank, went down another, and in a few minutes he had entered a long, winding lane, cool, green, and gloomy as a forest avenue. The ferns that grew on either side looked fresh and dewy as in the morning; the dark ivy that clung to the banks and twined round the trunks of the tall trees, whose boughs met overhead, had not a stain of dust on its glossy leaves. Scarcely a stray sunbeam, scarcely a glimpse of blue sky, broke on the green freshness of this path, which seemed to wind for ever away through the sunburnt landscape.

John walked on with renewed vigour, and, as he walked, some pleasant fancies went with him. He thought of the Hermit, of Mr. Ryan's predictions, concerning the truth of which no

reasonable person could feel a doubt, and of his mother's pride and joy when that grand secret should be revealed unto her. He had not seen her for seven years, he did not know when he should see her again, but she was always in his thoughts, and he now smiled triumphantly to himself as he conjured up her bright, glad face.

The lane which John was following led him to another, and this to another again; and so from green lane to green lane he went on, till he came to the little river that flowed, but somewhat further on, through the grounds lying around Mr. Blackmore's château. Here John paused, took a delicious draught of pure, clear water, threw himself on the grassy earth, and enjoyed the beauty of the spot. On one side rose a low slope, with young trees scattered here and there upon it, on the other a verdant wilderness of tangled brushwood; between these two the clear brook, dark and cool, flowed on windingly in mingled shade and sunshine, through brown old stones and drooping weeds, to a light background of shivering aspen trees. Lying on his back, with the blue sky looking down at him through the heavy

boughs, John felt wonderfully cool, refreshed, and happy. His day-dreams indeed were of the most delightful nature. What he would be, what he would accomplish, what he would do, suffer, if need be, and go through to gain his ends, he dreamed of then. He was imaginative, and Imagination sends forth many a ship on that fair sea where Fancy sits at the helm and Hope spreads the sails. Knowledge, with wisdom on her brow, sat in one boat; Ambition, in purple attire, steered another; and rosy Love, but rather far away, was in a third. There would soon have been a whole squadron of them, if two angry birds perched in a tree hard by had not begun a loud chattering quarrel, which acted like a squall, and dispersed the fairy fleet. Shy Fancy fled at the sound, and John, who was now thoroughly rested, rose and walked on.

He soon forsook the little river, and turned into a path where a thatched cottage here and there peeped out of the trees and bushes. A flight of steps cut out in a steep bank led up to a dwelling larger than the rest, but also thatched and low-roofed, and half hidden in verdure.

At the foot of these steps John Dorrien suddenly paused and said,

"Are you coming down?"

"No; come up to me," was the answer.

John bounded up with the agility of seventeen, and soon stood on the highest step but one.

"So that is how you kept your promise to Mr. Ryan," he said, looking up at Oliver Blackmore, who leaned over the low gate, looking down at him with innocence on his face—the same handsome face which had caught little Johnny's heart, and ruled his childish fancy seven years before.

"My dear boy," languidly said Oliver, ignoring John Dorrien's remark, "how can you have seen me? I saw you, but I was looking down—decidedly you must have eyes—a supplementary pair—in the top of your head."

"Why did you say you would come?" persisted John.

"I knew it would please the old fellow," said Oliver, amiably; "but of course I never intended it."

"He expected you to the last," said John.

"Of course he did. August, noon, nine miles, and he expected me! I declare that man's freshness is delightful; but, you see, Monsieur Latour is quite as delightful in his way, and far more accessible. Come in, he is in high feather to-day."

He opened the gate, and John entered a little grassy orchard, which extended in front of the low house. As they walked through it, Oliver said, with a shrewd look in his laughing black eyes,

"You would never guess Monsieur Latour's last! My dear boy, he is reading Telemachus for the first time—he is sixty, if he is a day, and he is reading Telemachus for the first time!"

He said no more, for they had reached the end of the little enclosure, and Monsieur Latour sat there before an easel, painting a lovely glimpse of the valley below, with its gliding river and picturesque peasant homes. He was a little man, with a large head, white hair, and a rosy face, simple as that of a child. That face beamed again with pleasure and welcome as its owner turned round and saw the newcomer."

"My dear Monsieur Dorrien," he cried, airily, "I was hoping for you. Monsieur Blackmore went to see if you were coming, and I am delighted to find that he caught you as you were speeding past, and lured you up to my hermitage. You have not been near me for ever so long, and the picture has progressed since you saw it last. Come, now—your candid opinion, if you please."

John Dorrien liked Monsieur Latour, but he did not like Monsieur Latour's pictures, which were daubs, and as he did not wish to give him pain, and could not conscientiously give him pleasure, he shunned his hermitage as a rule. He now regretted having yielded to the temptation of coming up. A blush spread over his sensitive face, and it was rather nervously that he said,

"Do you not remember, Monsieur Latour, that I know nothing of painting?"

"I like the impressions of untutored minds," promptly said Monsieur Latour. "Little Jeanne came up the other day, and she saw at once that this was a cow," added Monsieur Latour, pointing to a brown patch on the foreground of his

picture, which did credit to Jeanne's penetration. "I felt flattered, I can assure you, at that child's testimony to my humble abilities. Come, now, Monsieur Dorrien, what do you think of it? That little bit on the hill-side is not amiss, is it? One feels the air moving through those trees—shut your eye, and look at it so. There! That foreground, too, I like. I walked a league to get that bit of foreground. I am glad you like it," continued Monsieur Latour, warming with his subject, and convinced that John had been praising him all that time. "You may believe me, Monsieur Dorrien, but when I was a tailor in Paris, cutting out and fitting on coats, I knew I had missed my vocation, and that I should have been a painter. Yes, Monsieur Dorrien, I knew it all along."

"Ah! but tell him what the subject of your next picture is to be," urged Oliver, with a look full of mischief.

Monsieur Latour once more suspended his labours, and turned round on John.

"Have you read Telemachus?" he gravely asked. Then, without waiting for an answer—"Monsieur Dorrien, I had heard of Tele-

machus—who has not?—but I had never read that wonderful book till chance placed it in my hands the other day. Imagine my feelings! Why, Monsieur Dorrien, Telemachus is the grandest, the finest book that ever was written!"

"And Monsieur Latour's next picture is to show us Calypso on the sea-shore," said Oliver, gravely; "conceive that, if you can, John,"

Monsieur Latour laughed, and seemed in high glee.

"A fine subject, Monsieur Dorrien," he said, with a beaming face—"a noble subject. Imagine Calypso, with streaming hair and outstretched arms, the ship of Telemachus speeding away; or the grotto—think of the grotto!"

"Do, John," entreated Oliver, pathetically. "Think of the grotto—think of Calypso, as painted by Monsieur Latour!"

But John could not enjoy this. He felt angry and ashamed to see Monsieur Latour laughed at to his face. He wanted to be gone, and spite the entreaties of Monsieur Latour, begging him to prolong his visit, he persisted in going; and Oliver, with a pathetic "He will not let me stay with you and enjoy myself, Monsieur Latour," followed his friend.

"Two nice young fellows," soliloquised Monsieur Latour, as he resumed his labours, and put a dab of bright green on a tree; "but Monsieur Dorrien is by no means so amiable as his friend."

"John," said Oliver, as they went down the steps, "is it that you have no sense of humour, or is it that you are troubled with fears of the next world, and so could not enjoy Monsieur Latour?"

John was silent.

"It must be the next world," resumed Oliver, as they walked side by side. "Strange that you should let it worry you so! To me this world—a hot one to-day—is both delightful and sufficient; and I wonder, I do, at those who make themselves wretched in the here below, which is so certain to be blessed in the hereafter which is so doubtful. Don't tell me that if it had not been for the next world you would have learned Greek! It is not in human nature to go through such torture without hopes of a heavenly reward. From that misery my happy scepticism saved me. I could be lazy without one pang of remorse, or one fear of the Ten Com-

mandments. Mr. Blackmore wanted to coax me into it; but though I like him——"

"Yes; if you like anyone, you like Mr. Blackmore," said John, quietly.

"As you remark, with your delightful candour, if I like any one, I like Mr. Blackmore. He is such a handsome old boy! Well, then, I could not learn Greek to please him. And you know I am not a fool, John."

"Decidedly not."

"No; I am even clever, in my way; but I am lazy, I confess it; and laziness and the horror of the thing combined were too much for my wish to please my father."

"How, then, did you get on with Mr. Granby?"

"Delightfully. We smoked and drank brandy and water together by the hour. He was a little soft about Hegel, and wanted to explain to me how all within ourselves, and without ourselves too, is in the idea, as he kindly expressed it; but if it be true that, dying, Hegel declared of his disciples that only one man had understood him, and that, concerning that man, he had strong doubts. '*Et encore m'a-t-il com-*

pris,' says the legend. Why, I think that Mr. Granby must have been that intelligent person. However, he left Hegel for Comte, I believe."

John Dorrien was not yet a philosopher. He had not yet forsaken the flowery paths of poetry and eloquence, and knew nothing of Hegel and Comte, unless through hearsay.

"And what are you, Oliver?" he asked, standing still to put the question—"a Hegelian or a Positivist?"

Oliver laughed gaily.

"My dear John Dorrien," he said, "let us shake hands; your innocence does me good. Hegel is charming, but foggy; Comte is delightfully clear, but decidedly crazy; so I am Oliver Blackmore, future owner of a handsome property; young, healthy, and wise. I do no one any harm, that I am aware of; my enemies, if I have any, confess I am an amiable young man, though a lazy one—what more can the world or my friends want from me?"

John Dorrien walked on silently. He felt, though he did not care to analyse it, the difference which there was between his own earnest, passionate, ambitious nature and that of Oliver

Blackmore—so easy, so careless, so amiable, and so candidly self-indulgent.

Everyone liked Oliver, and John could not escape the universal lot. He liked his friend. He had also a keen sense of old kindness, for Oliver had redeemed his boyish promises, and Mr. Blackmore had been hospitable for many years; but for all that, John knew in his heart that there was more real sympathy between him and Mr. Ryan, whose hair was iron grey, than between him and Oliver, whose locks were black as the raven's wing. And yet Oliver's boast of being an amiable fellow was not a vain one. He liked being liked, much as a cat likes being stroked. He could not do without pleasing, and he laid himself out to please, with every one of the charming gifts which he had received from bountiful nature. His face was beautiful, his person was graceful, his voice was soft, his manners were easy and winning. He was very clever, and not quite so lazy as he chose to say. Study he objected to, as he objected to everything requiring hard work; but he liked reading, he had plenty of abilities, he was quick, clear-headed, and he had an excel-

lent memory. He had done more than smoke and drink brandy-and-water with his tutor, Mr. Granby. He had read prodigiously under the guidance of that gentleman. He was familiar with ancient and modern literature; and though he read the classics through the medium of translations, what did it matter, since he had no wish to quote? He was also familiar, thanks to Mr. Granby, with all the modern views and discoveries of science, and with every modern substitute for Christianity as well. He was indeed solid or learned or well-grounded in nothing, not even in English, though he had plenty of that fluency which is now so common a gift in society; but he passed for a very brilliant young man with the few people who knew him, and with all, save good judges of real merit, who are rare; he would have eclipsed John Dorrien, so silent, so reserved, and also so careless of shining, though endowed with a soaring ambition, that would have left far behind the few flights in which Oliver had ever indulged. There was, however, no rivalry between these two, and no prospect of any. Oliver was to be rich, he knew it, and relied

upon the world's estimate of Mammon with a very correct judgment for one so young. John Dorrien was his superior, granted; but what mattered it? So long as John was poor, what would the world care for John Dorrien's Greek and Latin? Besides, their paths were to be too wide apart for envy ever to step between them, with her hateful apple of discord. John was to return to England and fight his battle there; and for reasons which he never mentioned or alluded to, England was to be eschewed by Oliver Blackmore. "England is too foggy," he would remark, in his languid fashion; "too hazy, I ought to say. I require clearer skies, a lighter air, a warmer sun than she can give me, so I think I shall pitch my tent in this old red château of Mr. Blackmore's. I daresay England will not miss me."

That red house, with its high roof and many windows, and a rich background of trees, now rose before the two friends, and looked a pleasant abode enough in the Summer light, and yet Oliver Blackmore did not care to enter it.

"Let us stay out awhile," said he, sinking down on the rich sward—they were in the

grounds now—"and enjoy that little whiff of a breeze which is coming from the sea. There is no standing the house in this hot weather; and Mr. Blackmore will conclude that we are still seeing Mr. Ryan off. You can say anything you please, I feel in the mood to listen; or if you cannot indulge in original thought, the weather being too hot, repeat some Greek verses. *You* like it, I know, and I like to hear you. You have a good voice to begin with, and I shall understand a word here and there—it will be like looking at a landscape through one's half-shut eyes."

"And it will send you to sleep," said John Dorrien, a little drily.

"Very likely it will," replied Oliver, candidly; "but why should you grudge me my innocent slumbers?"

John yielded. It was enjoyment to him to repeat that sonorous Greek verse, and he knew that after a fashion Oliver liked to hear him. The whole day he had been haunted by a well-known passage in Æschylus—the monologue of the weary man, who, standing on the roof of Clytemnestra's palace, looks out for the fiery

signal that is to tell the taking of Troy, and to deliver him from his long watch.

Oliver, as he had said, understood a word here and there, and smiled languidly as John Dorrien's voice ceased.

"I am afraid," he remarked, "that I do not care for Æschylus. He is too cold for me; besides, in this case I feel nothing for that Greek slave or sentinel, and, strange to say, I sympathize with Clytemnestra. Agamemnon had been away too long, fighting for another woman, too, and then he brought home Cassandra. I say Clytemnestra has been ill-used by opinion. She only put one inconvenient man out of her way. Would Agamemnon have stuck at such a trifle?"

"It is not merely the murder that condemns her," quickly said John—"it is the treason."

"My dear boy, I shall turn Hegelian, and prove to you that what you call treason is a mere product of your imagination. For if there be nothing real in this world save the idea—— The dinner-bell, I protest! Oh! why will Mr. Blackmore be so barbarous as to dine at this hour?"

But there was no help for it. Mr. Blackmore was barbarous, and they must go in and dress. The old red house, which was called a château by courtesy, was a pleasant abode. The dining-room on the ground-floor was a low, broad room, a little gloomy, perhaps, but not uncheerful; and when the two young men entered it, and found Mr. Blackmore, handsome and jovial as ever, standing on the middle of the floor to greet them, with his hands in his pockets, and his good-humoured face beaming, John thought what a delightful place that château was, and how his mother would like it.

"We are late, I am afraid," said Oliver, demurely, "but we have been seeing Mr. Ryan off."

"Pack of nonsense!" interrupted Mr. Blackmore—"you were hard by. I saw you sprawling on the grass, doing nothing, and——"

"Now that is hard," said Oliver, looking injured. "Dorrien had been giving me Æschylus, and I was giving him Hegel in return."

"Now do let these confounded foggy and wild-brained German philosophers alone, will you?" said Mr. Blackmore, impatiently. "Hegel, Fichte, Kant, Comte—I am sick of the whole

lot. Stick to Locke, a cool, clear-headed Englishman, worth the whole bundle of them."

Oliver never argued with his father. He did not like the trouble, to begin with, and then it was so useless.

"Well, and what had Mr. Ryan to say?" resumed Mr. Blackmore, addressing John. "I hope he gave Oliver a lecture?"

"Oliver was not there," replied John, unmercifully.

Mr. Blackmore turned on his son, and with a stare, asked where the devil he had been all day.

"I have been enjoying Monsieur Latour," replied Oliver, unabashed, "and he was delightful, till John came and spoiled him. You know that Monsieur Latour is the retired tailor who paints hideous pictures, and lives in the little cottage up the cavée. Well, whilst he was fashioning coats and other garments, he neglected literature, and so never read Telemachus. Fancy that!—a man who has never read Telemachus, and to whom that son of Ulysses, and Calypso and Mentor, come with all the freshness of George Sand's last. His raptures are unbounded, and he will read the book

to you, and point out the fine passages, and tell you how he means to paint Calypso on the seashore, and——"

Here the entrance of dinner interrupted Oliver's discourse, to which Mr. Blackmore had listened with obvious amusement; but Monsieur Latour was resumed during the meal, and gave ample entertainment to both father and son. Even after dinner, Mr. Blackmore seemed to think that a retired tailor, who solaced his old age by the painting of pictures, and who had never read Telemachus, was a rare subject for a joke, and he laughed with a loud ha! ha! as he leaned back in his deep arm-chair, or stamped about the room with his hands in his pockets.

"Come, John, don't look so doleful about it," said he, giving John Dorrien's shoulder a hearty slap, "and don't be angry with that boy if he does laugh at poor Monsieur Latour. He has nothing better to do, you see. You have to work and to make your way, and his bread is all ready buttered for him, the worthless fellow! By-the-way," he added, without waiting for any answer, "are you connected with the Paris Dorriens?"

"I never heard about them before, sir."

"Ah! only namesakes. I thought so."

"What are these Dorriens?" asked Oliver.

"Very rich——" had begun Mr. Blackmore, but a visitor was announced, and John, who was shy after a fashion, quietly stole away and went out alone into the grounds.

The day was waning fast. The long red sunlight swept like fire across the green sward, and stole through the silent alleys, lighting up their dewy shade with richest gold and crimson. A peace, a rest after the hot day, had stolen over all things. The trees, half in burning light and half in deep gloom, cast their long shadows before them, as if hastening to cool their parched roots. The daisies in the grass had shut up their pink heads as tight as they could, and were already fast asleep; and everywhere the faint hum and low murmur of insects and little hidden creatures rose on the air like a welcome to the coming night. John sauntered on a while, then turned back. He took a path that led to the house and walked along it. The old château, that was Oliver Blackmore's home, and was to be his inheritance, gleamed far away at

the end of the alley. Its walls looked crimson in the burning light of the setting sun, its windows shone like gold or fire. It appeared a pleasant dwelling, warm and bright, with gay flower-beds around it, and beyond these the green shelter of fine old trees, rising in heavy masses against the clear French sky. John Dorrien looked at it without envy, but he thought of the rich Paris Dorriens, and he smiled. Who knew but that he, too, might be a rich man yet, with a home like this to take his little mother to? He had promised her that he would rub Aladdin's lamp for her—and why should he not? For, you see, John Dorrien was young and self-reliant. He had talent, he knew it, and he thought the world was all his own.

CHAPTER V.

"SEVEN years!" thought Mrs. Dorrien, as she sat down alone one evening in September, her pale face and bending figure looking very dim in the greyness of the English twilight; "well, it has been hard to bear, but what was it to what lies before me!"

Mrs. Dorrien might well say so. Her health was broken, her little means were gone, and she owed a hundred pounds, of which twenty were due to Mrs. Henry, her landlady; and Mrs. Henry, who was a widow, who had a family, and who let her first-floor furnished, was coming up this evening to settle accounts with Mrs. Dorrien; for Mrs. Henry wanted her money, and she could not wait, and she would not wait, either, &c., &c.

"Oh! what shall I do!" thought poor Mrs.

Dorrien. "Oh! Johnny, Johnny, you will never know what I have had to bear for your sake!"

Truly, her lot had been a hard one for these seven years. The parting from her boy had been cruel—the suspense of not knowing whether he would be accepted or not, and, when he was so, the fear that he would not get on, had worn her to a shadow. When Time had reconciled her to his absence, and convinced her that Johnny was to be the most brilliant scholar of Saint Ives, Mr. Perry died suddenly: with him died Mrs. Dorrien's most lucrative occupation, but not the debt which she had contracted to him, in order to pay for her boy's schooling. That debt crushed her; she sold all her valuables, she worked from morning till night, and still its baleful shadow was spread over her life, deepening more and more as the years went by.

And Johnny was so happy all this time! He was always at the head of his class, to begin with. Then he spent his holidays with Oliver; and Mr. Blackmore's château was quite equal to Windsor Castle, said Johnny; and the fishing and

the boating and the sea-bathing!—why, there had never been anything like it in his life! Then, when Mr. Blackmore and Oliver once went travelling, and Johnny had to remain at Saint Ives during the vacation, Mr. Ryan took him in hand and taught him fencing, and Johnny seemed to think that was almost better than the boating and the fishing; and if all this made Mrs. Dorrien very happy and very proud, it also made her very miserable and very jealous. Oh! Johnny, Johnny, how could you be so happy without your mother? And who and what were that Mr. Blackmore, and that Mr. Ryan, too, that they should bask in the sunshine of your presence, whilst she was starving in the shade?

For though Mrs. Dorrien wrote pretty letters to both these gentlemen, thanking them for their kindness to her fatherless boy, she thought in her heart that the compliment was by no means on her side, and she wondered that they did not seem to understand what it was for her to let them have the society of a boy like her boy. But these thorns in her lot could have been borne, if it had not been for the debt; and

even that could have been endured, but for a great, a terrible question, which a wiser and less ambitious woman would have put to herself from the first. What was Mrs. Dorrien to do with the brilliant scholar for whom she had made such stupendous sacrifices of health, money, and almost honesty, since she had contracted debts which she could not possibly pay? She had unfitted her boy for any trade or business by which money could be earned early, and she had no means of advancing him in any of the liberal professions for which she had fitted him.

No wonder that, as she sat alone on this September evening waiting for Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Dorrien could not look her future in the face. She was staring vacantly at the dull street, when a cab stopped at the door below. It was for the first-floor lodgers, of course. Who came to her? The early life of this poor lady had been severed from its later years by one of those calamities which alienate some natures from their kind. There was that in the past which she could not bear to speak of or to remember. She secured silence and oblivion

by the only means in her power, total solitude. She knew no one, called upon no one, received visits from none; so when there now was a sound of voices on the stairs, and a man's step mingled with them, when a knock at her door followed, and the door opened, and a tall dark form appeared in the opening, and it was plain that cab, voices, step, and visitor were all for her, she started to her feet in wild terror of the calamity which must now be crossing her threshold.

"All in the dark, little mother?" said a gay young voice.

The shock was too great. Mrs. Dorrien neither screamed nor fainted, but her head swam, and she would have fallen to the floor, if John had not caught her in his arms.

"Oh! John," she gasped, "what is it—what has happened?"

"Why, nothing, little mother, save that you do not seem to have got my letter."

"There is nothing—nothing wrong, Johnny?"

"Wrong!—no, indeed, little mother," he laughed gaily; "but do tell me how and where to get a light, that I may see you."

"Mary Ann!" called out the sharp voice of Mrs. Henry from the head of the stairs, "bring a light directly."

Mary Ann, who was coming up, appeared almost as soon as called, and setting the candlestick on the table, stared with open mouth and eyes at the new-comer, till her mistress sharply bade her go away, and shut the door. The girl obeyed, and Mrs. Henry remained, and stood looking on, unheeded by mother and son. And now they saw each other as time had made them. With dismay John looked at a grey, careworn woman; with mingled sorrow and pride Mrs. Dorrien lost for ever that little Johnny from whom she had parted on the deck of the steamer, and found in his stead a tall, manly young fellow, with brown hair curling round his white forehead, and his handsome eyes sparkling beneath his dark eyebrows.

"Oh! my boy, my boy!" she cried, "how beautiful you have grown!"

This injudicious exclamation broke the spell which had kept Mrs. Henry silent till then. She had been thinking of giving Mrs. Dorrien one evening's respite, and her hand was on the

lock of the door, when this cry of maternal pride exasperated her. What did Mrs. Dorrien mean, she should like to know, by keeping her sons like Princes in French colleges, and having them come over for the holidays, and spending money on travelling, driving up to her, Mrs. Henry's, door in cabs, and then gloating over their beauty; whilst her boys had to go to the poorest day-school, and never had a day's pleasure from year's end to year's end, and she, Mrs. Henry, worked herself to the bone to keep them, and could not get her own hard-earned money from first floor furnished or second floor unfurnished. She would not stand it—that she would not. So, in her sharp, hard voice, she broke on Mrs. Dorrien's raptures by saying,

"If you please, Mrs. Dorrien, I should like to have that account settled—sorry to interrupt you, but it will not take five minutes; and I was to come this evening, as you know. I have got the receipt ready, stamp and all, and as *of course* you have the money ready too, there will be no delay; and I can leave you the light, if you have none ready," added Mrs. Henry, trying to smile and look gracious.

No smile came over Mrs. Dorrien's face—she looked from her boy, whom she was clasping in a yearning embrace, to her landlady, and her poor sunken eyes took a pitiful, imploring look, and it was in a low, meek voice that she said,

"I am so sorry, Mrs. Henry, but I have been ill all day, and—and I had forgotten——"

"Forgotten!" cried Mrs. Henry, in her shrillest tones—"forgotten that you owe me more than a year's rent, Mrs. Dorrien! Well, I have not forgotten it, nor has my landlord, who never lets me off a day; and I shall have to pay him next Michaelmas, Mrs. Dorrien; and I don't keep my boys in foreign colleges—*I* can't afford it; and they don't drive up to anyone's door in cabs." Mrs. Henry was urged to this remark by the stern looks which John was casting on her as he heard his little mother addressed thus disrespectfully; "and I pay my way, ma'am, and can look any one in the face, ma'am."

"God help me!" said poor Mrs. Dorrien, sinking down on a chair and looking up at John. "Oh! my boy! my poor boy! what a welcome home!"

Mrs. Henry, who was exasperated by her troubles—and she had plenty of them—but who

was not so hard-hearted as she was sharp-tongued, would have relented on hearing this exclamation, if John had not interfered.

"Madam," said he, turning upon her with all the injured dignity of seventeen—"madam, how much does Mrs. Dorrien owe you?"

"Don't madam me, sir!" cried Mrs. Henry, in great wrath, "because I'll not stand it."

"I mean no impertinence," said John, still speaking loftily; "I only want to know how much Mrs. Dorrien owes you."

"Don't interfere, my dear," entreated his mother—"don't."

The request came too late.

"Twenty pounds sterling, five shillings and sixpence," sharply answered Mrs. Henry; "if you have got the money, I have the receipt."

"I have not got the money," answered John, still looking stiff and offended; "but I shall have it—soon, I hope."

Mrs. Dorrien looked bewildered, and Mrs. Henry incredulous.

"When?" she asked shortly.

John hesitated.

"In a fortnight, I believe," he answered at

length—"in a week, may be," he added, noticing Mrs. Henry's lowering brow.

The landlady stared at him.

"And where will it come from?" she asked point-blank.

"That," said John dryly, "is my concern."

"Oh! very well," cried Mrs. Henry, snatching up the light and walking to the door, "that is your concern, on my word! Well, I know what my concern is, that is all."

And giving the door a slam, she left mother and son in the dark.

"Where are the matches, little mother?" asked John, pretending to speak cheerfully.

Mrs. Dorrien did not answer. She rose, she looked for the matches, lit a candle with trembling fingers, then turning her pale, scared face upon her son, she said faintly,

"Oh! John, what is all this? Why have you come?—what have you been doing? You have exasperated Mrs. Henry. John, she will take everything I have, everything, and turn me out of doors to-morrow!"

"No, little mother," he soothingly replied, "she will not—it will be all right; but do let

me look at you. Oh! little mother, how you have fretted!"

"I could not help it, dear. My darling, how tall you are! And you have a beard, too."

"Not yet, little mother. Are you disappointed?"

She tried to laugh, but could not. She kept looking at him, seeking in that clever young face the sharp features of her little pale Johnny, in that light and slender form the little figure in grey, with its leather-bag strapped round its waist, which she could never forget. The boy was gone, and though manhood had not yet come, it was easy to see what manhood would be. But, even whilst she looked, bitter thoughts thrust themselves between Mrs. Dorrien and her boy's face. "Oh! John," she said again, "what is all this? Why have you come?"

"There is nothing wrong, little mother," he quickly answered, divining her thoughts. "I was at Mr. Blackmore's, as you know; well, his brother has died suddenly, and he and Oliver came over for the funeral, and they asked me to join them, and I could not resist the temptation of seeing you."

"And who paid for your expenses?"

"Oliver lent me the money."

Mrs. Dorrien stared at him in blank dismay.

John coloured.

"There was no time to write and consult you," he said quickly; "but it will be all right, little mother, on my word it will. And now," he added laughing, "can you let me have anything to eat?"

The request suspended Mrs. Dorrien's questions. She became strong, energetic, and active at once. In a few minutes John was eating eggs, drinking tea, and talking, all at once.

"Nothing new about Saint Ives," he said gaily; "always first, you know. I wrote to you how I got all the Greek prizes; but then we fellows of Saint Ives have a name for Greek, you know. The Abbé is a great man. He awed me terribly when I saw him first. I do not mind him a bit now. But he is strict—quite strict—we must be mediæval scholars, and grub over our studies. I wrote to you about Ludovic, that surly fellow who hates me. I shall overtake him in Philosophy next year; and plodder though he is, I shall be sure to

beat him, says Mr. Ryan. He is our great man now, but I have set my heart on being the first man of Saint Ives. I must and I will!" cried John Dorrien, with eyes sparkling at the thought of his triumph; "and I shall pass an examination for *bachelier ès lettres*, and get such a diploma as no one ever had."

Mrs. Dorrien's eyes, too, lit at the thought of her boy securing the championship of Saint Ives; but the flame soon died out of them as she remembered her troubles and Mrs. Henry. John's sensitive face quickly caught the meaning which he read on his mother's, and pushing his plate away, he said eagerly:

"Poor little mother! you are thinking of that horrid woman—don't mind her, and as to Saint Ives, what matter if I do not go back to it, I can work alone now, and I see, oh! I see," he added, looking dolefully round the bare room, "how dear my scholarship has cost you!"

"My dear, I do not grudge it," cried his mother, "if only I could keep you there longer, and if it were not for Mrs. Henry! Oh! my dear, why did you provoke her so?"

John stared.

"I only promised her her money," said he.

"But why did you, when it stands to reason that you cannot give it."

John became very red.

"But if I said it, I meant it!" he exclaimed very warmly, "every word of it, little mother."

"But you can't give her the money," said Mrs. Dorrien, looking vexed; "you can't give her what you have not got."

"But I will get it," insisted John, speaking in a clear positive voice; "I must and I will, only I should have explained it all to you first, as I would, too, if I had had time. Do you remember?" asked John, moving his chair near his mother's, and taking her hand as he spoke, "do you remember how, on the day when you came home to tell me that I was going to Saint Ives, I had been reading the story of Aladdin, and wishing for his lamp, so that I might rub and rub it for you?"

"My dear, I never forgot it," answered Mrs. Dorrien, smiling fondly in his face.

"Well then, little mother, I have got a lamp, and I am going to rub it, and to pay Mrs. Henry, and get you back all the pretty things with

which you have parted. Oh! if I could only get you back other things too—your pretty colour and your bright eyes!" he did not add "your black hair," but his voice faltered as he looked at the grey locks which he remembered so glossy and so dark.

"Go on, Johnny," said his mother; "tell me all."

"No one knows anything about it, save Mr. Ryan," said Johnny, blushing like a girl; "but the fact is, I have been writing a dramatic poem."

"A dramatic poem!" echoed Mrs. Dorrien, staring.

"Yes, a poem like Gœthe's 'Faust,' or Byron's 'Manfred,' that's what I mean, little mother." John spoke very coolly, and as if the writing of dramatic poems were as much a matter of course as the cutting of bread and butter. Mrs. Dorrien felt that some terrible misfortune was coming, but she did not realize it yet.

"My boy, John, you cannot be serious!" she faltered.

"Why not? I daresay you think me too young. Well, I cannot help being young.

What does one's age signify? It is one's work that is the thing. Well, I have read all that is written of 'Miriam the Jewess' to Mr. Ryan, and he thinks highly of it. Shall I repeat some of it to you, little mother?"

Mrs. Dorrien said "Yes," with a bewildered look, which made her son laugh.

"Red glows the east, as though some smouldering fire!"

began John; then he broke off with, "But I must tell you the subject first. You must know that Miriam the Jewess is a beautiful girl—all this happens in the Middle Ages—an orphan, and that she lives alone in a wild place in the Pyrenees. Men hate her because she is a Jewess, and fear her because they think she is a witch. The opening scene shows her alone, in a grand mountain solitude, watching the sun rise in the plain at her feet. And now I shall begin again."

John went through some hundred lines, then he paused and looked at his mother with that look which says so plainly, "What do you think of it?" Mrs. Dorrien gazed at her son with mingled pride, delight, and consternation.

"My dear boy," she said, clasping her hands,

"is it possible that you actually wrote those beautiful verses?"

"Then you do think them good?" said Johnny, his face beaming with delight.

"My dear, they are grand!"

"That is just what Mr. Ryan says. He says, little mother, there is nothing finer in all Milton."

"There is nothing half so fine," cried Mrs. Dorrien, who had never been able to finish "Paradise Lost."

"Oh! little mother, little mother, you are worse than Mr. Ryan, and he is bad enough. Don't you think Miriam's speech rather long?"

"Well, perhaps it is," confessed Mrs. Dorrien.

"Yes, but you see, as Mr. Ryan says, if you take out a line you spoil it all."

"And what comes after that speech?"

"Ah! it is not written yet. I mean not written so as for me to read it to you, but I can tell you what it is about. Jacques the chamois-hunter appears, and sees Miriam. The fact is that, rude, ignorant, and rough as he is, he is bewitched by her spiritual beauty. You see he has a pretty little foolish betrothed called Rose,

but he does not care about her, and without knowing why, he is always haunting Miriam's steps. Then there is a Baron, a real mediæval Baron, who wants to carry off Miriam; then there's a hermit, who converts her; and, last of all, Jacques and Miriam flee together, make their way to the sea, and there sail away, and are never heard of more. But all this is quite rough yet, and I have only passages here and there that are really finished. However, I shall look out for publishers to-morrow—but, no, not to-morrow. I must first write out an outline of the subject, and insert the finished passages in their proper places; when that is done, I shall look out for a publisher. Mr. Ryan says there is no doubt that I shall get a handsome sum for it. Of course I must part with the copyright, for Mr. Ryan, who knows all about publishing, —he wrote a book on 'Irish Antiquities,' you know,—says publishers are too sharp to let such a thing as 'Miriam' slip out of their fingers without securing it. However, when it comes to my second poem, I shall make my own terms, of course. And now, little mother," added John, with his brightest smile, "you know all

about my 'Aladdin's Lamp,' and how I mean to pay Mrs. Henry."

Mrs. Dorrien looked at him, and was mute, but she could have cried aloud in her anguish, it was so great. So this was the end of her weary seven years—an unfinished scholar, a boy poet; and this was how John meant to pay Mrs. Henry in a fortnight—nay, in a week. She did not speak at once, she could not trust herself with speech. At length she said,

"The poem is not finished, how, then, can a publisher give you money?"

"Mr. Ryan's 'Irish Antiquities' was not finished, and he got money for it," replied John, with a secure smile. "Bless you, little mother, I know all about it."

Again Mrs. Dorrien was silent. She felt helpless and powerless. Johnny, once so submissive, was strangely altered. He was self-confident, self-reliant, and he had been so buoyed up by that Mr. Ryan, that, with all his fondness for her, her opinion, and she saw it very well, was of no account. She knew little enough of poetry—nothing of publishing, but she knew life, and John's "Lamp of Aladdin"

filled her with silent despair. Her first act was to go down, see Mrs. Henry, and try to undo the fatal effect of John's grand ways. She had some trouble in pacifying that angry lady—angry especially at having been called "Madam." "I never was called Madam before, Mrs. Dorrien," said she—"never!"

"He meant no harm," pleaded the mother; "he is only a boy, Mrs. Henry; you have boys of your own—dear, good boys, I know; don't be angry with mine."

She tried to smile at Mrs. Henry, who relented a little, but would pretend not to do so; and thus the quarrel was half made up, and Mrs. Dorrien, having indulged in a few bitter tears on the dark and silent staircase, went back to her son.

John was writing when Mrs. Dorrien opened the door. A brilliant idea had come to him, and he was putting it down lest it should escape. How handsome he looked, in his mother's eyes, as he sat bending forward, with the light shining on his intellectual face, and his long white fingers thrust through the curls of his brown hair.

"What are you doing, dear?" she asked, coming up to him and leaning over his chair.

"Going on with the outline of Miriam," he answered, with sparkling eyes. "Oh! little mother, if I can only carry out my idea, what a grand thing it will be!"

She sat down and watched him with a sort of dull despair. So far, at least, as speech went, she let him have his own way. She even listened to more passages from Miriam the Jewess, and praised them; but when they parted for the night, John sitting up to go on with his "outline," Mrs. Dorrien gave way to her grief.

For hours she lay awake that night, watching the pale moonlight on her window blinds, counting every hour that struck in the clock of Kensington Church, and saying to herself over and over again—"Oh, God help me! What have I done—what have I done!"

Sermons have been written on the vanity of human desires—ever in vain. Man will not submit to Providence—man will, if he can, rule and govern his little world. Mrs. Dorrien's world was a child; she had early decreed that her boy should have a classical education, and

now that her object was well-nigh accomplished, she was in despair at her success. She had committed a fatal mistake—she knew it, but only made the discovery in order to fall into another no less fatal than the first. She had raised John too high—she now wondered how she could bring him down. When Heaven, by placing her in poverty, seemed to show her the humble path which her boy must tread, Mrs. Dorrien had rebelled against the lesson; and when John came back to her, unfitted for the commoner ways of life, Mrs. Dorrien rebelled again. So, whilst the youth sat up full of ardour and faith, longing for success, money, and fame, feeling sure of them all—had he not Mr. Ryan's verdict for it?—his mother lay awake planning and plotting how best to counteract all his hopes and lay them in the dust; and scarcely had wish and prayer been fashioned in her breast when they seemed to be heard. And when they had been heard, indeed, and the mother had drawn her son away from that beautiful world of fancy to which she had done much to lure him, when, wearied with cares and often pierced with sorrow, John Dorrien almost wish-

ed that his days were over, and that, like the hireling, he had won his wages, when all his young illusions had faded out of the pages of his book of life, as the barque which bore Miriam the Jewess and her lover had faded away on the far sea-horizon of the poem that was never finished, then Mrs. Dorrien wept and lamented that her prayer had been heard, but was not yet corrected, and would, had she been able to do so, have again made out John's life according to her own ideas of what his happiness should be.

CHAPTER VI.

"ONLY fancy, little mother," said John, the next morning at breakfast, "I quite forgot telling you last night, but there are—there actually are Dorriens, English Dorriens, in Paris. Mr. Blackmore has told me so. Has anything fallen?" added John, as he saw his mother stoop, as if to pick up something from the floor.

"I have got it," she said, looking up again. "What were you saying?"

"There are English Dorriens in Paris," repeated John.

Mrs. Dorrien was always pale now, so she could not be said to turn pale on hearing him; but yet the life-blood deserted her cheeks, and left them sallow. Her eyes grew dull, her lips parted, and she put down her cup nervously.

"You are not well," said John, alarmed.

"Only a spasm—do not mind it. What about these Dorriens?"

"Well, there is only one, for Mr. Dorrien's son is dead. It is quite a long story, little mother. These Dorriens left England with King James, but instead of entering the French army, or trying to rise like gentlemen, since they were such by birth, they founded a commercial establishment in Paris, and the house exists still—more than a hundred years old, says Mr. Blackmore. A great wholesale house for fancy stationery, note and letter-paper, and envelopes. There were a good many Dorriens formerly, but some returned to England, and stayed there—I wonder if we are related to them?—and now there is only one French Dorrien left. I don't know why I call him a French Dorrien, for he was born in England, and his wife was an Englishwoman. Well, he is immensely rich, has a most extensive business, to which he is quite a slave, is up at his work at six in the morning, and is never in bed before twelve at night. Mammon! Mammon!" said the youthful philosopher, shaking his head over Mr. Dorrien.

"Mr. Blackmore seems to know a great deal about Mr. Dorrien," said Mrs. Dorrien.

"I am not sure that he has ever seen him; but he has seen his house, and gives a most picturesque account of it. Such an old, old house, in an old part of Paris, built round a courtyard, and with a large garden behind—a garden with trees that have stood a century, little mother; and just fancy an ancient marble fountain, with a heathen river-god pouring water out of his stone urn, and—little mother, have you another spasm?" asked John, breaking off in his narrative to look anxiously at his mother's face.

"I am subject to them," she replied faintly; "but just open the window, will you?—the air will revive me."

John obeyed; he threw the window open; he came back to his mother, and was full of concern. "Oh! little mother," he said, sorrowfully, "how altered you are! You never had spasms formerly—you never had anything."

"Yes, yes, people will alter," said Mrs. Dorrien, a little impatiently. "I am better now. Shut the window, dear. What about that Mr.

Dorrien? How old is he?—has he any children?"

John answered that Mr. Dorrien's son, the only child he had ever had, had died some time ago. Mrs. Dorrien sipped her tea, and made no comment. Then all of a sudden she became inquisitive about Mr. Blackmore. What sort of a man was he? Where did his brother die, and where was Mr. Blackmore staying? At the Charing Cross Hotel? How odd! That was the last place she, Mrs. Dorrien, would have fancied that a man like Mr. Blackmore would stop at. John gave her a puzzled look, but he had nothing to say for or against the Charing Cross Hotel.

Breakfast was over. Mrs. Dorrien went to her room, and presently returned dressed to go out.

"I do not want you, dear," said she, forestalling his proposal to accompany her. "I would rather you went on with your outline."

"It will be finished to-day, little mother. I can take it to a publisher to-morrow. He can give me an answer after to-morrow, and we can settle about terms and all that on the next day. So, you see," conclusively added John,

"that I have plenty of time to go out with you."

"Not this morning, dear," said his mother. "I am only going on some tiresome business."

"To-day is Tuesday," said John, counting on his fingers; "let me see, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—little mother, Miriam will be disposed of on Saturday or Monday next at the latest, so you need not worry about business, or about that horrid woman below," he added, with a look of disgust, as he thought of Mrs. Henry. But Mrs. Dorrien persisted in going out on her tiresome business, and also in declining John's society. He should accompany her another time, said she; so she kissed him tenderly, gave him a wistful look, and slipped downstairs as hastily as if she had feared lest he should follow her.

John had no such thought; John was blest in the society of Miriam the Jewess, and had no suspicion that his mother had gone out in order to divide him from that beautiful maiden for ever. Ah! happy hours of young poet love, hours tender and pure, why are you so fleeting? John Dorrien is not a young man now—he has had his share of human bliss and woe, but he always looks back to that morning spent

with Miriam in his mother's sitting-room on the second floor of the Kensington lodgings, with fond and sad recollection. He loved this Miriam so entirely! He was not jealous of Jacques a bit. Why should he? Save when the chamois-hunter was required for dramatic action, John ignored him, and unscrupulously appropriated the dark-eyed, high-souled Jewess, lovely twin-sister of Scott's "Rebecca." He had her now; he sat down by her side in the gloom and freshness of the grand old forest trees, where the green ferns grew high around them, where the wild deer sped by; whilst the thrush sang sweetly on the boughs above their heads, and where not even a faint murmur of the far-away world could steal in through the low dim horizon that enclosed them. But no, Miriam wanted freer air than that of forests; besides, John Dorrien was not sure that they abounded in the Pyrenees; so these two wandered together in a mountain solitude, where the grey torrent leaped down among brown rocks, and passed, all wrath and foam, between its barren shores.

On they went, climbing till they reached

a savage peak, whence they viewed the kingdoms of this world lying below at their feet. They saw that world of men and the dun smoke of its cities; the waving corn and the green pastures of its tilled lands; the glancing light of its rivers pouring down to the sea, they saw, too; and though they held it fair, they loved it not. Had not they (Miriam and John Dorrien) tested its worthlessness? From where they stood, could they not survey the ruins of Greece and Rome, and the battle-fields of to-day? Did they not know what became of the dust of conquests, and what was the end of mighty armadas? Then would they not let that false world go by, and live their own life in their blest solitude? How they were to fare up there, John Dorrien did not think fit to say; and we may be sure did not, even in his own thoughts, inquire. Why should he? Miriam the Jewess was beyond human wants; and the John Dorrien who climbed the mountain peak with her partook of her nature. The other John Dorrien, who was now working so hard at a dramatic poem, was a very different person indeed. He wanted success and fame, and

plenty of them ; he wanted money, and though not covetous by nature, he wanted plenty of it too. For this John Dorrien was very practical, after a fashion, and though he might gaze down on the kingdoms of this world with sublime contempt (in Miriam's company), he knew very well, and had known from his childhood, poor fellow! that there is no doing without gold or silver. That his dramatic poem would speedily get him an ample supply of both, he did not doubt; but, indeed, what did John Dorrien doubt? That he was a true poet he felt quite sure; that his dramatic poem would live as long as the English language was equally certain—as certain that he, John Dorrien, would be, or ought to be, buried in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey. If he had not had this faith in himself, he could not have written a line, for he was proud, and hated mediocrity. But though he was not vainer than most clever boys of his age, his classical education, the consciousness of his great natural gifts, and his entire success in all he had hitherto attempted, rendered his illusion easy. It was sweet and fair, and whilst it lasted, filled his young life with enchantment.

This, one of its last hours, brimmed over with delight. We are told that Circe mingled the wine of Pramnium and new honey in the cup, which she handed to the companions of Ulysses; and so there were various ingredients in that cup which John Dorrien now mixed up so pleasantly for himself. There was money for his mother, and all her missing furniture bought back; there was the pride she would take in her son's success, and there were, too, the tears she would shed when she saw his dramatic poem printed, and looked up from the title-page to his dead father's portrait, that pale, mild, sad image now gazing down from the wall at John Dorrien. Surely all this was sweet as new honey to the boy's generous heart; but strong and intoxicating as the wine of the Greek sorceress was, the thrilling thought which made his grey eyes flash and sparkle with fire—"You, too, will be one of that glorious company," it said, as he looked at the well-remembered volumes on his mother's book-shelves—Virgil's eclogues—his father's copy—a few of Shakespeare's plays, and Milton's poems.

Can such bliss fall to the lot of mortals? Alas! very rarely. And though John did not suspect it, his mother, whose pale face now looked in at him from the door, smiling faintly, had gone out to seek a spell more potent than that of the white-blossomed Moly; a spell which drained the cup of all its sweetness, and destroyed its magic for ever.

"My dear, are you not working too hard?" said Mrs. Dorrien, coming in; "you are so flushed."

"And you, little mother, are so pale."

"I am always pale now," replied Mrs. Dorrien, with a half-sigh; "at least, I think so—for I have had no one to tell me about it."

She sat down, and pressed her hand to her side. If John lacked the true poetic genius, he failed in none of the poetic sensitiveness. A boy at school had had a pain in his side, and had died. Was his mother going to die? Miriam vanished as the dread thought shot through him. He was afraid, he was, that his little mother was not well. Should he run for the doctor?

"The doctor!" echoed Mrs. Dorrien, sharply;

but she checked herself, and declined mildly medical interference. At the same time, she confessed she was not very well; and if Johnny did not mind staying with her that day, and not going out, she would like it.

"Mind it!" cried Johnny—"of course not." He would stay with her, and read her more of Miriam, for he had been working hard whilst she was out.

Mrs. Dorrien winced at the proposal, but would not decline listening to that dramatic poem of John's, which was to work such wonders for them both. She reclined on the sofa, and John read with all the passion and enthusiasm of one whose heart has been, and is still, in his work. Mrs. Dorrien watched his flushed face and sparkling eyes, and felt so miserable that she had to look away. Why or how had he taken this dreadful fancy for poetry? It was a perfect infatuation, and she saw no cure for it. She could not bear it; and saying she felt exhausted and wanted to sleep, she turned her face to the wall, whilst John renewed his labours.

Mrs. Dorrien rallied a little in the afternoon,

but she could eat no dinner—perhaps, poor woman! to leave plenty for John. She took some tea, however; and after tea she inspected John's wardrobe. She made sad discoveries there, and was very angry with the *lingère* at Saint Ives.

"Why, John," she said, quite crossly, "what has become of that set of collars which I sent you last year? I made and stitched them myself—and now do just see the state they are in!"

She held one up in indignant amazement, but John, who was thinking whether his poem on solitude ("A charming lyric," said Mr. Ryan) would not do very well spoken by Miriam—

> "Oh, solitude, when you and I
> First met upon the wild sea-shore,
> And waited for the coming roar
> Of waves, or heard the sea-bird's cry."

John, we say, expressed his regret at his mother's annoyance, but without that degree of angry warmth which, in Mrs. Dorrien's opinion, the occasion required.

"You are quite taken up with your poetry," said Mrs. Dorrien, rather sharply.

"Of course I am, little mother," he answered,

gaily; "I mean to make quite a grand thing of it. And if you had not been so poorly, I should have gone round to see Oliver Blackmore."

"Why so?" asked his mother, quietly.

"Why, to ask him to help me to get the proper information about a publisher. I don't want to go to the wrong house, you understand."

"My dear," nervously said his mother, putting down the damaged collar, "do not be in a hurry. Mrs. Henry will have patience for a while. I mean, it will all be better than you think, and—and—I would not show the outline to anyone till the poem is more advanced, if I were you."

"You think I ought to write more of it?" said John. "Perhaps the scene between Miriam and Jacques wants to be developed," he suggested, with sparkling eyes.

Mrs. Dorrien thought it did. In a moment John's manuscript was on the table, and he was up to his ears in Miriam, Jacques, and the Hermit whom he brought in. Mrs. Dorrien breathed a sigh of relief. Time was her great ally

now. Who could say what a few days more might not bring forth?

But the impatience of showing his outline to a publisher returned the next morning, and John would certainly have yielded to it if Mrs. Dorrien had not been so unwell. She complained of no particular ailment, but she seemed miserable when John spoke of leaving her, and at all times she looked harassed and worn. John felt very uneasy about his mother, but his uneasiness only rendered him more anxious to show the outline to a publisher, and, as a preliminary step, to see Oliver Blackmore.

"I must, little mother," he said, early one morning, "I really must; and I shall go before breakfast," he added.

"Very well, do," replied his mother, a little sullenly, for John had spoken in the tone of one who has a will of his own, and who means to use it. He went, but returned earlier than his mother expected him. She gave him a furtive look as he opened the door and came in. John's face was clouded. Mrs. Dorrien's heart began to beat.

"Only think, little mother," he cried, in a

vexed tone, "they left last night. I should have gone yesterday."

Mrs. Dorrien was silent, but her face cleared.

"What will you do now?" she had begun to say, when the postman's knock was heard below. Mrs. Dorrien started up, then sank back and bit her lip.

"That dreadful knock!" she said. "It always terrifies me. I always used to think it brought me bad news of my Johnny. I ought not to care now that you are here, but the old nervousness clings to me still. And yet I know that letter is not for me."

"But it is for you, little mother," said John, who had been listening to various sounds on the stairs during his mother's long explanation, "and I am afraid it is the cause of some difference among the powers that be."

Such was the case. Mrs. Henry had left the parlour to protest against Mary Ann answering the postman's knock, or anyone's knock, on behalf of the people on the second-floor. They had a bell—let the bell be used. As to that letter, it might lie on the bracket in the hall till Mrs. Dorrien chose to come down. No servant of

hers should wear out her stair-carpet on such an errand, &c., &c.

Almost all this John Dorrien had heard. Red as fire, he went down and took the letter from where it lay, whilst Mrs. Henry, who stood at the parlour-door, and whose bark was worse than her bite, said something about servants having so much to do in a house like hers.

"Oh! certainly," stiffly replied John, who was boiling over with powerless wrath and useless indignation.

As he went upstairs with the letter in his hand he recognized the French stamp. He looked at it more closely, thinking it might be for himself; but no, Mrs. Dorrien was very legibly written upon it, and, what was more, this letter for his mother came from Paris. John was fairly bewildered.

"I suppose Mrs. Henry was rude?" said Mrs. Dorrien, as he entered the room.

"Very rude; but, little mother, this is a Paris letter, and it is actually for you." He handed it to her with undisguised curiosity in his frank face. Mrs. Dorrien looked very much surprised. A letter from Paris, and for her! Was there no

mistake? She seemed to hesitate to open it, and when she did so at length, it was with a protest that she could not imagine what this meant. John, to whom it did not seem to occur that his mother could have a secret to be kept from him, stood leaning against the mantelpiece, looking earnestly at her whilst she read. The letter was not a long one, yet it took Mrs. Dorrien some time to go through it; and when she had finished it, she folded it up, put it into the envelope, and laid it on the table; then she raised her eyes, and looked earnestly in her son's face.

"John," she said, after a brief pause, which seemed eternal, so silent were these two, so hushed was the room, "I have something to tell you."

John showed no token of surprise; he knew very well that his mother had something to tell him, and he was even not very far from devising what that something was.

"You mentioned a family of the name of Dorrien the other day," she resumed, "a commercial family, established in Paris. John, it is your family. The last head of that old

commercial firm was your great-grandfather. Your father and the present Mr. Dorrien were first cousins. When I married your father he took me home to the old house you described to me the other morning. There is not a room in it that I am not familiar with. Those large dark old rooms, how well I know them! And you, my boy, were born in one of them, and, as a little child, you have played on the grass near the old fountain of the river god, with his marble urn."

Something in these remembrances proved too much for Mrs. Dorrien; she laid her head across the table near which she was sitting and wept bitterly.

John never moved from the mantelshelf against which he stood leaning. Prepared by intuition though he was for what was coming, he had heard her with amazement and some sorrow. All these years his mother had deceived him; all these years she had spoken as though he and she were alone in the world, without kith or kin; all these years she had given him to understand that he was born in some remote part of England. Therefore he

said nothing—he felt that he had nothing to say. He had no right to reproach her in speech, and he was silent, but in his heart he knew that he had been cheated and wronged out of that great inheritance—the truth.

"And now," said Mrs. Dorrien, looking up and drying her tears—"now, John, you may read that letter, It is from your father's cousin, Mr. Dorrien."

"We have done without him all these years, little mother," said John, coldly: "what do we want with him now?"

Mrs. Dorrien coloured.

"The fault may have been mine," she said; "as soon as he heard about us from Mr. Blackmore, he writes."

"Did he require a stranger's account to hear about us?" said John, still speaking coldly.

Mrs. Dorrien looked nervous.

"John," she said, in a low voice, and without looking at her son, "that letter is more for you than for me. Read it, then see what you have to say to it. I shall leave you free."

CHAPTER VII.

THE storm which swept James Stuart and his dynasty away from the throne of England sent many a humbler line than that royal one into exile. It was the boast of the Dorriens that they had given up all, house, land, and country, for the sake of their sovereign. Their old hall in the north passed into the hands of strangers; their ancestral acres were tilled for new masters; another race than that of the Dorriens saw its stalwart sons and blooming daughters grow into strength and beauty round what had once been their hearth. True, the Dorriens had never been very great—most true, they had never been very wealthy, but they were a race tenacious of their own, and who felt its loss keenly; a proud, stubborn, touchy race, who soon found out that they were of little account in Saint-Germain, and that there was

sad wisdom in the voice of him who first said: "Put not your faith in Princes."

The Dorriens did not complain—they were too proud for that. They did not return to England to be branded as renegades by the vanquished Jacobites, or to be scorned for their poverty and fallen estate by the triumphant followers of William and Mary. They did what they had ever done since they had borne the name of Dorrien: they shaped their own course and fought their own hard battle. No one ever exactly knew how they began—the Dorriens were not fond of talking about it; they also knew how to keep their own counsel, and they had found it hard enough to lay down the sword and estate of gentlemen without adding to the hardship of their lot by laying it bare to the world's cold eye. They wanted no help, no pity, and they did very well without either. They had already pushed their way up and made money, when in the year 17—, they founded the great firm of Dorrien, La Maison Dorrien, as it was called in the Marais.

Fashion was already deserting, and wholesale commerce invading, that once aristocratic neigh-

bourhood of Paris. Amongst its ancient dwellings was one which the Dorriens were rich enough to purchase from its spendthrift owner. It was a large old hotel, going to decay in a gloomy winding street. A tall gateway, studded with rusty iron knobs, shut it in from the outer world. It stood between a wide grass-grown court and a large green garden, which spreading trees filled with cool shade. This garden the Dorriens did not touch—they kept inviolate its old trees, where the birds sang in Spring, its gravelled paths and its old stone fountain ever pouring out water with a low murmur.

The house, which was three stories high, with a lofty roof, narrow windows, iron balconies, and a *perron*, they kept for their private residence; the low buildings that enclosed the court, giving it a cloister-like aspect, and one side of which had been a ball-room, they devoted to business. Other changes they did not make. They did not alter the inconvenient old rooms to modern taste and uses. What they could keep of the old furniture they kept. Maybe they pitied that fallen race on

whose decay they were thriving, and remembering their last Dorrien home, were lenient to this. But they made it bear their name, and had that name engraved above the gate, with the date of their entrance—1720. Here, in that year of grace, they set up their household gods; here they dwelt a hundred years and more, proud, retiring, and prosperous, strangers in the land where they throve and made their wealth. Unlike the Irish exiles, these English Dorriens never amalgamated with the French. Their blood never mingled with that of their hereditary foes, and, like the French protestants in England, they kept up the old language, the old feelings, and, so far as they could, the old Dorrien race. Whenever there was peace between the two countries, the heir of the Dorriens sailed across the seas, made his way to the north of England, and there sought and generally found some maiden of Dorrien lineage, whom he wedded and brought back. And so the family was perpetuated, the name lived on, and the firm of Dorrien, after weathering many a storm, a terrible one in ninety-three, and an awkward one under the Napoleonic era, more than fulfill-

ed its century, and was a great firm still, the oldest, if not the greatest, in all that part of Paris where it had first laid its seat. Mr. George Dorrien was the head of the firm at the time of which we write, and he had been so for some years. He was a handsome man of fifty, tall, languid, and prematurely grey. He had been reared in England and spoke French well, but with a slight English accent. He liked neither France nor the French nation, nor French ways, but he was amiable, and endured the country, the people, and their manners. The life of an English country gentleman was that which he would have preferred, and that which he thought to lead when he married Miss Kenelm the heiress. Before she came into her property, however, circumstances occurred which compelled Mr. George Dorrien to do as his fathers had done before him, and to become the head of the Maison Dorrien. He submitted, but he did not like it. His wife died young; leaving but one child, a boy, George Dorrien, like his father, who grew up wilful, wicked, and so unloveable that his grandfather, Mr. Kenelm, disinherited him by his will, and died a week after signing

it. Mr. George Dorrien bore that too, and did not even say much to his son on the subject. He was aware that it would be useless, moreover he liked a quiet life, and to say the truth he cared very little about George Dorrien, junior. He knew that the great tradition of their house was broken; that this worthless boy would never take up the hereditary task, nor carry on the old name with honour. It was hard, but it could not be helped, and no one ever heard Mr. Dorrien complain that this adverse fortune was his. He did not marry again. Mr. George Dorrien rarely made two experiments of the same kind. He asked Mrs. Reginald Dorrien, his cousin's widow, to keep house for him; the lady came; he liked neither her appearance nor her manners, but what was done was done, and he endured her with that amiable fatalism which was one of the traits of his character. He endured many things in that passive spirit, amongst the rest the flight of his son, who vanished one night from Paris, kindly leaving his debts behind him, and who was not heard of for three years.

Mr. George Dorrien had a confidential clerk,

who had been thirty years in the service of the Maison Dorrien. His name was Brown; he was steady, industrious, and trustworthy; but he was not a man of many ideas, and though his youth and manhood had been spent in Paris, he had never fully mastered the mysteries of the French idiom. There were French clerks, who wrote the French letters, or who dealt with French customers; Mr. Brown was a sort of extra, for Mr. Dorrien's own use; nevertheless it was generally understood that Mr. Dorrien could not have done without Mr. Brown, and whenever the master of the house was out of the way, Mr. Brown ruled supreme.

Now one evening, in the Winter of the year 18—, Mr. Dorrien, who was fond of music, went to the Italian opera, and left Mr. Brown as usual in command of the firm. There was some extra work, and two of the clerks remained beyond their time to do it. They sat in the counting house, a small room on the ground-floor; each at a desk on a high stool, each scribbling away as if for dear life, each grumbling at Monsieur Brown as the cause of this extra task, which deprived them of an evening's pleasure; for was it

not Monsieur Brown who, by his lamentable ignorance of the French language, had laid this additional burden of fourteen letters on their devoted backs.

"Ah! but," argued Durand, the younger clerk, "let us be fair. What would become of us if Monsieur Brown knew French?"

"True," answered his companion Leroux, whose pen continued to fly over his paper, "most true. Without Monsieur Brown's French to relax our minds, existence——"

Here the door of Monsieur Brown's private room opened, and he appeared on the threshold, with a frown on his high, yellow forehead. Monsieur Brown, or rather Mr. Brown, was a man of fifty-five, neat, methodical, and stolid. He frowned as a part of his business authority, but the frown was an exertion of Mr. Brown's will, not of his temper. He belonged to the imperturbable order of men. He was never ruffled, never discomposed, never communicative or reticent. Whether, indeed, he had feelings of any kind was more than anyone knew, but everyone did know that he was impenetrable, and never uttered one syllable more than

he intended uttering. All he now said was, coldly regarding the two youths, who, with a slightly-raised colour, had returned to their task, and whose pens flew once more over the paper—all, we say, that Mr. Brown said, was the one word: "*Fini?*"

Very volubly he was informed that the fourteen letters were nearly finished. Mr. Brown held out his hand, ten letters were put into it; he read them one by one,—he could read French perfectly,—returned four to Durand and three to Leroux, then tore three letters, and placing the torn fragments of two letters on Durand's desk, and of one letter on Leroux's, he returned to his own room, and closed the door on himself.

Monsieur Durand raised his hands to his head, as if bent on rending his glossy and highly-scented locks; and Monsieur Leroux doubled up his fists, and was walking up to Mr. Brown's door in that warlike attitude, when it opened again, and he shrank away abashed, as Mr. Brown appeared once more.

"*Vite,*" he said, and closed the door.

Monsieur Leroux threw himself back in an attitude of mock despair, and exclaimed, in a

deep but subdued voice, "Lost! Lost! Undone!"

Whereupon Monsieur Durand pathetically entreated him not to expire.

Whilst these two youths—the older one was not eighteen—went on with their light comedy in the counting-house, and Mr. Brown was nodding over *Galignani's Messenger* in his room, tragedy in the shape of a telegram was turning round the corner of the street, and approaching the home of the Dorriens. The messenger happened to be a new man, and as the telegram was simply directed to "Monsieur Dorrien, Rue de la Dame au Marais," he, having no number to guide him, was obliged to apply to a shopkeeper for information.

"Dorrien!" said the man. "Why, there is the house before you, close by the gaslight."

The man looked. A pane in the lamp had been broken by the stone of some mischievous urchin, the light flared in the wintry wind, and flickered across a tall dark gate before him. Above the gate was a defaced escutcheon, supported by two calm stone giant heads, and above these he read, not painted on a board,

as in the houses on either side, but deeply cut in the stone, as if defying time, the name of DORRIEN, and beneath it the date, 1720. He crossed the street, he raised the huge iron knocker, and let it fall again heavily. The door in the gate opened noiselessly, and a woman coming out of the porter's lodge, with a light in her hand, asked him what he wanted. Oh! it was a telegram for Monsieur Dorrien, was it? Then would he please to come this way? She crossed a wide, paved court, beyond which a tall house rose dimly in the dark night, went up the steps of the *perron*, pushed a door open, entered a flagged hall, and opening another door, showed him into the counting-house. Durand was just then administering comfort to Leroux. A telegram for Monsieur Dorrien! Oh! then Monsieur Brown was the person to give the receipt. So Monsieur Brown's door was tapped at, and Monsieur Brown having said "*Entrez*," with that peculiar intonation which was the delight of Durand's youthful heart, the messenger stood in the presence of Mr. Dorrien's confidential clerk. He was as laconic as even Monsieur Brown could wish him

to be. Monsieur's signature there, and seven francs fifty centimes was all he asked. He got both signature and money, counted and pocketed the one, never looked at the other, and went his way escorted by the portress. When he had reached the great gate, he said to the woman,

"What do they sell here?"

"Paper."

"And who lives in those low buildings round the court? The workmen?"

"No—paper." Then she added, explanatorily, "We want no men. We do not make paper here. We only store it, and sell it wholesale."

"And that date above the gate, what does it mean?" asked the man, who seemed to be of an inquiring turn.

"We founded the firm in 1720," replied the portress, in a tone that said, "Who are you, and where do you come from, that you have never heard of the firm of Dorrien?"

"Ah, well, I was not born then," said the man. "Good night," and he vanished down the dark street.

Mr. Brown, sitting in his room, opened the

telegram, read it through, turned round the page to see that there was nothing more, then folded it up neatly, put it in his pocket, and looked at his watch. A quarter to nine—the fourteen letters must be finished by this. Well, the fourteen letters were finished, and Mr. Brown had no need to tear any of them up this time. He nodded his silent approval. Durand and Leroux sprang to their feet, cleared pens, ink, and paper away by magic, and were gone in a twinkling.

Whilst they crossed the court, talking and laughing like schoolboys, Mr. Brown locked the counting-house door, returned to his own sitting-room, lit a little lamp which he had there for that purpose, and went on his usual night round. Through every one of those wide rooms built round the court, all stored with reams upon reams of paper piled to the very ceiling, he went, making every door fast behind him. There were many rooms, and Mr. Brown's principle was "slow but sure." He now took his time, he never was in a hurry; he scanned every shelf with a searching eye, he looked at the boarded floors, at the curtainless windows,

with their strong wooden shutters, at the ceilings, with their faded Cupids toying in faded clouds, and especially he sniffed the chill air of those empty rooms, asking them for the faintest scent of fire. Mr. Dorrien's premises had narrowly escaped being burned down a year before this, and it was in consequence of this peril that Mr. Brown had undertaken his present task of surveillance. The round took him fully three-quarters of an hour, and when it was ended, it brought him back to the flagged hall at the foot of the staircase, which led to Mr. Dorrien's private apartments.

Mr. Brown did not live in Mr. Dorrien's house. He could have done so, had he so chosen. Mr. Dorrien had rooms to spare, and Mr. Brown, being single, could not possibly have been troublesome; but though Mr. Brown was at his desk by seven in the morning, and often did not leave it till ten at night, it pleased him to have "his own home," as he termed the dull and cheerless tenement which he rented on the third-floor back of a neighbouring house. Mr. Brown often dined with Mr. Dorrien and Mrs. Reginald Dorrien, and whether he did so

or not, he never left the house without bidding Mrs. Reginald, as she was called, for brevity's sake, a good evening. Such was his purpose now, as he slowly went up the great oaken staircase, with its carved iron balusters, all flowers and scroll-work; and having reached the second-floor, he tapped discreetly at the door of Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room.

"Come in," said a deep voice—a voice, indeed, almost too deep to belong to one of the gentler sex—and thus authorized, Mr. Brown entered.

Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room did credit to that lady's taste. It was bright, warm, and pleasant. Brilliant flowers had been scattered by a liberal hand on the carpet; the paper on the walls was rich and dark, the furniture was handsome and almost luxurious, and Mrs. Reginald herself wore a rich, stiff silk that rustled with every motion of her stately person. We say stately, because we wish to be civil; gaunt and bony would be more correct epithets. Mrs Reginald could not help these disadvantages, no more than she could help her chest voice, and the accident which, by depriving her in

early youth of her left eye, had given the remaining orb a dark, not to say sinister, expression. In plain speech, Mrs. Reginald was what is called ugly. She knew it—she was very quick, very clever, very sharp, and very shrewd; nevertheless, when Reginald Dorrien, a worthless shoot of the good stock, assured her that he was in love with her, she believed him, and was only undeceived when he absconded with her little fortune of two thousand pounds two weeks after the wedding-day. He died soon after this, leaving her penniless. Mr. George Dorrien had then just lost his wife; all he knew of his cousin's widow was that she had been ill-used, and that her personal appearance was enough to scare away scandal. He proposed that she should come and keep house for him, and Mrs. Reginald gladly accepted.

Mr. George Dorrien was a fastidious man; his wife had been pretty, and he liked pretty faces. He was shocked when he saw Mrs. Reginald, but he was too courteous and amiable to betray the feeling. His forbearance was rewarded by such a housekeeper as falls to the lot of few single men. Mrs. Reginald was

Irish, and she had that variety of gifts which is one of the attributes of the Celtic race. She learned French in no time; she ruled French servants with amazing tact and shrewdness; she reduced her cousin's expenditure one-third, and yet kept a liberal house—in short, she did wonders, and Mr. George Dorrien knew it, and was both generous and grateful, but it was not in his power to like Mrs. Reginald. Her appearance was to him what a badd rawing, her voice what a discordant note in music, are to connoisseurs, and her sharp, pungent, pitiless speech what all unconventional speech must be to a polished man of the world. Such was the lady who now rose, with no little rustling of her stiff, rich silk skirt, to welcome Mr. Brown.

"You are late this evening, Mr. Brown," she said, pointing to an armchair before the fire, and resuming her own.

"We had many letters, many letters," replied Mr. Brown, who found compensation for his forced laconism in French by a certain redundance in English. "Do you know where Mr. Dorrien spends this evening, Mrs. Reginald?"

"He is gone to the Italian Opera—but only

for an hour or so. I know ne leaves before the ballet. What do you want him for?"

Mrs. Reginald's one eye seemed to bore Mr. Brown through and through.

"I thought I had better go and seek him—seek him, Mrs. Reginald; but if he leaves before the ballet, I think—yes, I think I shall wait."

"Can you tell me what it is about?" asked the lady, point-blank. "If it is business, keep it to yourself; if not, out with it, man, and don't beat about the bush."

"It is not business, Mrs. Reginald," slowly replied Mr. Brown; "but the telegram was directed to Mr. Dorrien, and perhaps I had better not tell you—yes, I think I had better not," said Mr. Brown, thoughtfully.

Mrs. Reginald looked up at the ceiling, folded her hands, and tapped her feet.

"How old are you, Mr. Brown?"

"I am fifty-five, Mrs. Reginald."

"Fifty-five! and you only 'think,' you don't 'know' whether you ought to tell me or not. Now, Mr. Brown, a man of fifty-five who only 'thinks,' and does not 'know,' is simply absurd.

When I was nine years old, Mr. Brown, I did not think, I knew what I meant to say or do."

"You are a very superior woman, Mrs. Reginald, very superior," replied Mr. Brown; but he did not tell Mrs. Reginald what the telegram was about.

"I know it is about George," she said, sitting straight up in her chair, and with her one dark eye full upon Mr. Brown's stolid face—"I know it is—he has turned up at last."

Mr. Brown rubbed his nose, but remained imperturbable.

"He was wicked at nurse, wicked at school, wicked at the desk—George will be wicked to the end, Mr. Brown."

Mr. Brown nodded slowly, but whether in approbation or dissent it was hard to say.

"And if he had a particle of shame or pride or honour," said Mrs. Reginald, kindling, "he would die, Mr. Brown, he would die, and drag down his sins and misdeeds with him into the grave, and set a tombstone, a heavy one, over them—a tombstone on which there should be written no epitaph."

But Mrs. Reginald's passion—and it was

genuine, for she was imaginative and vehement, as well as sharp and shrewd—could wake no corresponding echo in Mr. Brown's matter-of-fact mind.

"No epitaph would be unbusiness-like, unbusiness-like, Mrs. Reginald," he answered, sedately. "I do not think Mr. Dorrien would allow that."

"Then he is dead!" she cried, almost rising from her chair; and sinking down in it again, she exclaimed, "Thank heaven!" Then, as if to explain her meaning, she added more calmly, "At least, he can sin no more."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Reginald, I did not say that Mr. George Dorrien was dead."

But Mrs. Reginald interrupted him with an impatient wave of her bony hand.

"There, there," she said, "that will do—keep your secret and your telegram—poor boy, poor Georgie!" she added, with a sudden rush of tears, "he was a bad boy, a very bad boy, but I remember the little fellow, with his red sash, and his varnished boots, that he was so proud of, and now——" Here the door opened, and Mr. Dorrien entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Reginald," he said, with his usual courtesy, "I believe I came in without knocking." It was Mrs. Reginald whom he addressed, and Mr. Brown that he looked at. "I understood," he continued, still looking at the head-clerk. "that a telegram had come, and I knew of course that I should find Mr. Brown here."

Mr. Brown, who had risen, coughed, and Mr. Dorrien, walking up to the fireplace, leaned languidly—he was always languid—against the marble mantelpiece, still looking at Mr. Brown. Mr. Dorrien was a tall, pale, worn man, with regular features and pale blue eyes, that said very little, as a rule, of what might be going on within their owner's mind; but just now there shone in those blue eyes something like an anxious gleam of uneasy speculation—as if Mr. Dorrien were prepared for unpleasant news, and hoped for no good tidings.

"I have received a telegram, sir," answered Mr. Brown, in his deliberate fashion; "and it is not about business."

A little sigh of relief escaped Mr. Dorrien, the light died out of his blue eyes, and the interest

seemed to pass out of his pale countenance; till with a start as of unpleasant recollection, and a sudden flush, he said,

"Then it is about Mr. George?"

"Yes, sir, it is about Mr. George," said Mr. Brown.

"Well, and what has he been doing now?"

Mr. Brown was silent.

"I understand," said Mr. Dorrien, in a low voice, "he is dead."

"Yes, sir, Mr. George Dorrien is dead."

Mr. Dorrien neither moved nor spoke. He looked like a man on whom a blow has fallen, but he also looked like one who can bear that blow. Nature had not given him that passionate love of offspring which makes doting fathers, and what affection he might have been inclined to bestow on his only child that child had early alienated. His son had wounded him in his love and in his pride, and Mr. Dorrien was not the man to forget it.

"Well, Mr. Brown," he said, after a long pause, during which the room was very still, "what else is there?"

Mr. Brown handed his master the telegram, but

Mr. Dorrien shook his head and handed it silently to Mrs. Reginald. It would not have been in that lady's nature to keep, under these circumstances, a solemn and conventional aspect suitable to the occasion. As her cousin afforded her this triumph over Mr. Brown, she gave him, Mr. Brown, a nod and a wink of her one eye which might have upset the gravity of another man. But Mr. Brown remained immovable, and looked all decorous seriousness whilst Mrs. Reginald read the telegram aloud. It was thus worded:

"*Commissaire de Police, Rue Leroy, Marseille, to Mr. Dorrien, Rue de la Dame, Paris.*

"Traveller, named George Dorrien, died this morning at Hôtel de la Croix, Marseille. Began, but could not finish, letter to his father, G. Dorrien. Lies at hotel. Left a thousand francs in gold, now in my hands. Answer at once by telegram."

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Dorrien, when Mrs. Reginald, folding up the paper, handed it back to him.

"It is all," she answered; and her voice faltered a little, for again a vision of a bright,

handsome boy, with laughing blue eyes, had flashed before her.

Mr. Dorrien sighed bitterly, and almost smiled.

"He would have been twenty-two next month," he said; then he added aloud, sharply, as if he resented this slight betrayal, "Mr. Brown, would it be taxing you too much to ask you to go to Marseilles and see to all that dreary business?"

"I can go to Marseilles, sir; but the commissary asks for an immediate answer."

"True; I shall go round to the office and give it myself. When can you go, Mr. Brown?"

Mr. Brown could go to-morrow. There were some little business matters to be attended to, but perhaps Mr. Dorrien would kindly see to them in his (Mr. Brown's) absence. Oh! yes, Mr. Dorrien—and he said it rather wearedly—would see to everything.

And so the conversation drifted away from death to the doings of life, until the little gilt clock on Mrs. Reginald's mantelpiece struck eleven. Mr. Dorrien heard it with a look of pain, for that very clock, a Cupid letting his

arrow fly at Time, had been one of his first presents to his young wife, and had struck the hour when his son was born—not in this room, indeed, nor even in this house, but with that same little clear, silvery voice with which it now seemed to sound his death-knell. Mr. Brown, who had no associations with the clock, took out his watch, thought Mrs. Reginald's time-piece must be five minutes slow, and said it was time for him to be off. Mr. Dorrien, who never cared for a tête-à-tête with his cousin's widow, followed him out, and Mrs. Reginald remained alone.

This lady was a philosopher in her way, but she was not a follower of the Peripatetic school. "I do my thinking in my arm-chair," she used to say; and it being considered that Mrs. Reginald was a very active person, who sat but little, the amount of thinking which she did was creditable to the freshness and vigour of her mind. Mrs. Reginald's "thinking" could not be called a diamond of the first water; but then she did not mean it to shine before the world, or to be set and mounted in any fashion; and so, instead of being neatly cut up into

axioms or into sententious epigrams, it was a very loose sort of thing, and might be best likened to a wilful nag who galloped off with its owner, or ambled gently into the world of Fancy, as the lady's whim might be. As Mrs. Reginald now sat alone, looking at her fire, brooding over the sad, brief fate of the dead, she soon wandered away from George Dorrien, his boyhood, his sins, and his death, to a fancy that was ever dear to her. Spite her personal disadvantages, Mrs. Reginald had not been able to guard her maiden heart, a true and tender one, from the fond dream of wedded love. She had had two weeks—no more; Reginald Dorrien had behaved admirably for those two weeks —and those fourteen happy days had given the wife a tender desire of which neither sorrow, nor treachery, nor time had been able to quell the longing.

Mrs. Reginald had wished—eagerly and ardently wished (as she could wish, being a woman of strong will and passions)—to be a mother. Her boy—her Reginald—had been as real to her during those brief hours of her married life as many a babe who sleeps at his

mother's breast, or laughs up in his mother's face. She had nursed him, fed him, washed, dressed, and combed him; she had kissed and scolded and whipped Reginald. She had taught him his letters, and made him lisp his first prayers at her knee; she had watched him through imaginary illnesses, cured him—spite the doctors; sent him to school, educated him, made him a great man, and, finally, married him to a girl of her own choosing, and then bid him and his young wife a stern adieu. It was right that Reginald should marry, it was his duty—every man's duty—to marry; but she, his mother, who had had him to herself all these years, could not share him with another woman, and be second where she had once been first; and so she, his mother, would leave him to his wife, and go and lead her solitary life.

Now, this day-dream, which ought to have vanished with Reginald's faithless father, did not so depart. It remained behind long after that unprincipled gentleman had fled, and it haunted the deserted woman and clung to her poor sore heart. She had been cheated, betrayed, scorned, contemned, but she knew that

the world, as a rule, keeps its pity for victims of interesting appearance. A tall, gaunt woman of thirty—with one eye too—is not the sort of Ariadne that the world cares much about. But her child—her boy, if she had one—he would feel for her. His heart would burn over her wrongs, even though her wronger was his own father; and if he could do nothing else, he would, by his honour and his love, avenge her.

Alas! that boy—that Reginald the second, as faithless as Reginald the first—never came to heal the bitter wound in his mother's heart. That fond vision of the future faded away into the darkness of the past. Yet Mrs. Reginald always loved him, after a fashion, and—leading, as she did, a solitary life, so far as her feelings were concerned—she kept him in a corner of her heart, and cherished him there.

Sometimes Reginald slept very long; for days and weeks and months he slumbered, and deeper grew his sleep as the years wore on; but a look, a word, a child's face, a boy's gay voice or ringing laugh, could call him up into sudden life, and bring him back once more to his mother's eye.

Now, this evening, as she sat alone, Mrs. Reginald allowed her thoughts to stray from the dead to the dream of her youth.

"My boy—my Reginald—should not have died so," said she, nodding at the fire, "and amongst cold-hearted strangers—not he; and no Mr. Brown should have gone to bury him. No; if it had pleased God to have called him in the prime of his manhood, his mother would have watched by his death-bed; or if that could not be, yet at least the hands that had rocked the baby to sleep would have laid out the man for his last rest."

Here a tap at the door interrupted Mrs. Reginald's reflections.

"Come in," she said, somewhat sharply—for whenever Mrs. Reginald had allowed this fancy to master her, she was not fond of confronting her kind.

The intruder was Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown had come for the telegram. Had not Mrs. Reginald got it? Really! And Mr. Brown's eyes wandered round the room in search of the missing document.

"Stop!" And Mrs. Reginald, who had risen,

and who stood with her back to the fireplace, extended her hand rather imperiously. "Stop, Mr. Brown, if you please; I want to know what epitaph you will put on the gravestone."

"I think, Mrs. Reginald, that the name and surname of the deceased will do."

"'George Dorrien, ætat. 22.' I hope you will add, 'Deeply lamented by his father,' Mr. Brown."

"If such should be Mr. Dorrien's wish, Mrs. Reginald——" cautiously began Mr. Brown,

"Bah!" she interrupted, with a look of profound disgust. "I tell you that if I had reared a kitten, I should feel more in learning that it had died than our Mr. Dorrien feels for the death of his only child—of his boy," added Mrs. Reginald, with all the emphasis of her deep voice.

Mr. Brown thought that, as Mrs. Reginald had not got the telegram——

"Stop!" interrupted Mrs. Reginald, taking hold of his arm, and poking the long forefinger of her other hand in the region of Mr. Brown's heart; "can you tell me what our Mr. Dorrien, so refined, so polite, has got there?" Here

Mrs. Reginald's finger became more expressive than Mr. Brown wished. "Because, if you cannot, I can," continued Mrs. Reginald, releasing him. "Our Mr. Dorrien has got that," said Mrs. Reginald, raising her forefinger aloft, and deliberately tracing the figure of a gigantic circle in the air—"nought, nought, nought," she added, nodding at Mr. Brown, lest he should not have understood her meaning. "And now, if you want the telegram," she said, in a matter-of-fact, business-like tone, "better ask Mr. Dorrien for it. I gave it back to him."

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. BROWN went to Marseilles, and saw George Dorrien buried. No pomp marked the funeral of the prodigal son; no epitaph was inscribed on his plain tombstone. Mr. Brown brought back the unfinished letter, but neither that nor any other paper, nor any document found in the possession of Mr. Dorrien's deceased son gave the least clue to the manner in which he had spent the last three years of his life. There was nothing and no one to tell how he had become possessed of the thousand francs that were found in his valise when he died. The real place he had come from when he stopped at Marseilles was a mystery. Toulon had been written in the hotel register, but that was evidently a mistake, for Constantinople was marked on his luggage. Mr. Brown did not think it needful to go to the

capital of the Turkish empire in order to make inquiries. It had never been a safe thing to search too closely into Mr. George Dorrien's private affairs. He was dead now, and there was, as it were, an end to him. The very best and kindest thing that could be done was to let him rest in his grave in the cemetery, with the long morning shadow of the cypress trees falling on his plain stone slab, and the hot Provençal sun resting upon it day after day.

When Mr. Brown came home, and repeated to Mr. Dorrien the few meagre particulars which he had been able to collect concerning "Mr. George," the bereaved father heard him out and made no other comment than a grave and rather sad "I am much obliged to you, Mr. Brown."

Mrs. Reginald, when she heard Mr. Brown's account, observed sharply:

"It is just as well, Mr. Brown, not to know too much about some people, and George Dorrien never did a more considerate thing than to die off as he did."

Some time after his son's premature death, Mr. Dorrien went to England, partly for business

and partly for a change. He remained several weeks away, and during his absence Mr. Brown reigned supreme. Of course he opened all the letters, and thus it came to pass that a letter directed to Monsieur George Dorrien, Hôtel de la Croix, Marseille, was forwarded to Monsieur George Dorrien, Rue de la Dame, Paris, and was opened and read by Mr. Brown. He had been specially authorized to do so by his master, who had indeed foreseen this particular case, and warned him by no means to wait for his return.

"There is no knowing," he had said rather drearily, "what sort of letters requiring immediate attention may come for my son—and I have no family secrets from you, Brown?"

"You are very good, sir, very good; but the responsibility, sir, the reponsibility may be very great."

Mr. Dorrien candidly confessed that it might be so; then after a moment's thought: "If you should be at a loss," he said, "consult Mrs. Reginald. She is shrewd and sensible."

Now the letter which Mr. Brown received on a morning in February, six weeks after the death of Mr. Dorrien's son, was a letter involving,

in his opinion, a perfect host of bewildering responsibilities. He had scarcely read it through when, with as great an appearance of uneasiness as it was possible for his stolid face to wear, he left his room. Without even answering Monsieur Durand's modest question of what he was to do next, Mr. Brown walked upstairs to Mrs. Reginald's apartment. The morning was a fine one, and he scarcely hoped to find Mrs. Reginald within. He did not venture to ask himself what he should do if she were out; and fortune indeed so far favoured him that he had no need to do so; Mrs. Reginald had her shawl and bonnet on, but having, luckily for Mr. Brown, mislaid her gloves, she was still within. Nothing was so unusual as for Mr. Brown to come up to her at that hour, and Mrs. Reginald fairly stared at him as he entered her sitting-room, with his pen behind his ear and an open letter in his hand.

"Bad news," she said sharply.

"Not good news, at least, Mrs. Reginald, not good news. Before he left, Mr. Dorrien bade me, in case anything of the kind should occur, apply to you for advice, and if you please I shall do so now."

"If I please, indeed! Did I tell Mr. Dorrien that I would advise in any business of his—never! Ah! there is my right-hand glove, but where is the left-hand one. Mr. Brown, do you see a brown kid glove anywhere."

"But, my dear Mrs. Reginald, only consider; this is quite a case for a lady's consideration. The late Mr. George——"

"I know, I know," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, who had found her missing glove, and was walking to the door, "it is about a wife—of course George was not going to leave that mischief out. Of course he married some unfortunate little creature, and ran away from her, the scapegrace! Well, Mr. Brown, other women have been treated so, and have borne it, and she must bear with it too."

"But, my dear Mrs. Reginald," entreated Mr. Brown, following her downstairs, for the inexorable lady was going down as fast as she could, "there is not merely a wife, as you shrewdly surmised, but a child."

"Of course!" emphatically cried Mrs. Reginald, her one black eye sparkling—"of course the villain was not going to leave *that* out

either. Of course he had a child, and ran away from it."

"I even think there are two children, Mrs. Reginald—I really do. There must be two, Marie and Antony."

Mrs. Reginald stopped, and looking hard at Mr. Brown, began reckoning on her fingers.

"Then they must be twins, Mr. Brown," she said—"yes, they must be twins."

"Very likely," replied Mr. Brown; "but, my dear madam, if you will kindly consider——"

"And what have I to consider, Mr. Brown," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, half-stern, half-sorrowful. "They have got their mother, and she has them, and I hold her a rich woman, even though she should have to beg her bread and their own—not that I say Mr. Dorrien will allow that—but I say it again, I hold her a rich woman."

"Well, she is not a poor woman, I suppose, for she mentions in her letter that she brings the sum of five thousand francs, which she calls 'mine.'"

"Oh! of course," sarcastically remarked Mrs. Reginald, still going down. "George was not

going to make a poor woman of his wife. You don't suppose that, Mr. Brown."

"My dear madam," replied Mr. Brown, looking steadily at Mrs. Reginald, "*is* that lady, or rather was that lady, the late Mr.George's wife?"

"What?"

"I say was that lady the late Mr. George's wife? She signs her name as Antoinette, Comtesse d'Armaillé."

Mrs. Reginald stood still, and asked Mr. Brown, with considerable asperity, "What he meant by coming to her with his cock-and-bull story of twins?"

"But I never said there were twins, Mrs. Reginald," argued Mr. Brown. "I spoke of two children, and I suppose they are the late Mr. George's, for the lady says, 'Marie and Antony kiss papa.' And I also suppose they are the Countess's children as well, for in another part of her letter she says, 'My dear Marie and Antony make me every day a happier mother than ever.' If you will kindly read the letter, Mrs. Reginald, you will understand it all, I am sure."

Mrs. Reginald's black eye sparkled. "Mr.

Dorrien did not request me to open and read his letters," she said drily, "and I will not do so."

"But, my dear madam, it is almost indispensable that you should read the letter. This Countess, who writes from Mauritius, expresses her uneasiness at not having heard from her beloved George, declares that she will and must follow him, and informs him that if she should not find him in Marseilles, she will go on to his father's house in Paris. So that this Countess, the children, and several servants—she mentions three—may actually be coming here. And, my dear Mrs. Reginald, mark her words—she expressly says, 'You will scarcely have got my letter before you shall see me.'"

Mr. Brown looked uneasily in Mrs. Reginald's face, and Mrs. Reginald fitted on her gloves, buttoned them, and looked hard at Mr. Brown.

"Well, Mr. Brown," she said coolly, "what will *you* do when that Countess comes with her children and her servants and her luggage?"

She spoke with some appearance of interest, as if she really should like to know what Mr. Brown's line of action would be; but Mr. Brown was silent.

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Reginald, nodding at him, "it is an awkward position, and I say it candidly, Mr. Brown, I should not like to stand in your shoes."

Mr. Brown did not answer this, but following Mrs. Reginald downstairs, he made another attempt to soften that obdurate lady.

"I wish I could persuade you to read the letter, Mrs. Reginald," he said—"I really wish I could."

"I daresay you do," was the amused answer.

"Because you have so much good sense—as Mr. Dorrien says——"

"Good morning, Mr. Brown," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, composedly. They had reached the bottom of the stairs, and now stood in the hall, at the head of the *perron*, "I wish you well out of it—yes, Mr. Brown, I wish you well out of it."

Mrs. Reginald, as we said, stood at the head of the *perron;* before her was the court, and beyond the court the vaulted archway and the great gate. That gate was always open in the daytime, and let in a grey glimpse of pavement from the dull street beyond. But some dark

body or other—a carriage, thought Mrs. Reginald, who was short-sighted—now obstructed that glimpse.

"Mr. Brown," she said sharply, "what is that at the gate?"

"I really do not know, Mrs. Reginald," answered Mr. Brown, prudently turning to the door of his private room.

But Mrs. Reginald caught hold of his arm and forcibly held him back.

"Mr. Brown," she said, "you do know—it is a carriage, and it is actually coming in here, Mr. Brown."

"Well, Mrs. Reginald, what about it?" replied the imperturbable Mr. Brown.

"What about it!" exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, stamping her foot on the flag of the hall, and almost giving him a shake in her wrath. "Why, what carriage is it?"

"Perhaps Mr. Dorrien is coming back, Mrs. Reginald, for I see luggage——"

But here Mr. Brown paused. He knew that Mr. Dorrien was certainly not in that railway *omnibus de famille*, which was even then turning into the court, and Mrs. Reginald's one eye,

fastened on him with unutterable scorn, warned him not to proceed.

"Well, sir," she remarked, with cutting irony, "why don't you go on? You see luggage, do you also see a lady, children, and servants as well? Because I do, Mr. Brown."

Yes, truly Mrs. Reginald did see all these things, for whilst she was most unwisely keeping Mr. Brown at bay, and wishing him well out of it, a railway omnibus, with its roof heaped with luggage, was slowly driving into the court. Short-sighted though she was, Mrs. Reginald did not merely see this vehicle, but she also saw a very little and very young lady in black alighting from it; and after the lady a mulatto girl, with a child; then a nurse with a baby; then another lady, tall and thin, and not very young; then another servant, laden with bags, bandboxes, and umbrellas; and, last of all, a negro boy in livery, who gravely carried a large doll.

"Eight in all," said Mrs. Reginald, nodding at Mr. Brown, folding her arms, and speaking in her deepest and most emphatic voice. "Eight in all, Mr. Brown."

In the meanwhile the portress, who had come out of her lodge looking rather bewildered at this invasion, went up to the little and young lady, and having exchanged a few words with her, ascended the *perron*, whence Mrs. Reginald had not stirred one inch. She knew that the generalship of this campaign had passed from Mr. Brown to herself. She was too brave to shrink from her duty, and though she was by no means confident of victory, she was not going to surrender the fortress in her keeping without firing a shot in its defence.

"Madame," said the portress, "this lady, the Countess of Armaillé, asks for Monsieur Dorrien. I have told her that he is not in Paris, but she does not seem to understand."

"Ah!" emphatically said Mrs. Reginald.

The Countess was coming up the steps of the *perron*, and Mrs. Reginald could see her well. She was a little childish-looking creature, with a round, babyish face. The lids of her soft, dark eyes seemed red with crying, and Mrs. Reginald also noticed that the little Countess was thinly clad, in garments more suited to Summer than to February, and that she appeared to shiver

with the cold. Mrs. Reginald's heart relented towards her—it was never a very stern or hard heart—but not Mrs. Reginald's purpose.

"Madam," she said, coming forward to address her, "I understand that you have asked for Mr. Dorrien; he is not in France, I am sorry to say."

"Yes, I know," replied the little lady, with a quivering lip, "but I am his son's widow. Mélanie," she added, turning to the tall and thin lady, who stood close behind her, "do tell Justine to make haste in with these children, it is so cold." And the poor little lady shivered again.

"Excuse me, I understood that I was addressing the Comtesse d'Armaillé," said Mrs. Reginald, a little sharply.

"Yes, yes," impatiently replied the lady, "I am the Comtesse d'Armaillé, of course, but I was Mr. George Dorrien's wife." Here her lip quivered again. "Mélanie, shall we have rooms upstairs or below?"

She had entered the hall, and turning her heavy dark eyes to her companion, she addressed her thus, in a languid, appealing tone, the tone

of one accustomed to rely upon another for help and guidance. The lady whom she called Mélanie compressed her lips in a way that gave a peculiar, though momentary, expression of power and will to her pale, unexpressive face, and replied, with perfect composure, that the rooms upstairs would be better for the children.

"Yes, I think so too," said the little Countess. With a sigh she began her ascent, but scarcely had she gone up two steps, when, resting her head on the iron balusters, she burst into tears. She wept very long and very bitterly. When her sobs had ceased, she looked up, and said wearily,

"Tell her, Mélanie."

Whereupon Mélanie, turning to Mrs. Reginald, who stood looking on like one petrified, composedly informed her, in foreign English, that the Comtesse d'Armaillé had learned her husband's death in Marseilles two days ago, and had not yet recovered from the shock. Mrs. Reginald bent her head, as much as to say, "Of course." Her mind was quite made up now, and she knew what she had to do. She allowed the Countess, Mélanie, Justine, the children,

It was the Countess whom Mrs. Reginald thus addressed, and the Countess, withdrawing her handkerchief from her eyes, said, almost sharply,

"Are you Mr. Dorrien's wife, madam?"

"No, madam, I am not," was the short answer; "but whilst Mr. Dorrien is absent, this house is in my keeping. I am sorry to say that, before he went away, he left no orders concerning his daughter-in-law—perhaps because he was not aware of her existence. I must therefore suggest, madam, that you should repair to the nearest hotel, and there wait until I have communicated with Mr. Dorrien, and learned his pleasure."

The Countess heard her, but looked too much surprised to speak. A pale, slight flush rose to the cheek of the late Count d'Armaillé's sister, and assuming an amazed look, she said,

"Are you aware, madam, of what you are doing? Are you aware that the Countess of Armaillé is of a family so ancient that no man in all Mauritius could have aspired to her hand without presumption, my brother excepted, and that by marrying Mr. Dorrien's son she com-

mitted one of those acts of imprudence which only love can account for."

"Ah! love, indeed," murmured the little Countess—"oh! my poor dear angel!"

"George Dorrien an angel!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Reginald; but she respected the little Countess's grief, and looked hard at the two children. The mulatto girl had seated herself on the sofa; the baby was lying in her arms, and the other child, a pale girl, who had her mother's dark eyes, stood leaning against her nurse, too tired and listless to be amused even by the big doll which the negro lad was dancing up and down before her.

"Let Mademoiselle Marie alone," sharply said the lady who was called Mélanie. "Madam," she added, turning to Mrs. Reginald, and speaking rather imperatively, "these children are tired, the Comtesse is tired, and I confess that I am tired—is it not time that all this should end?"

But of this speech Mrs. Reginald took no notice. She had ascertained that the children were not twins, and that one of them was certainly not George Dorrien's child. For further

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information she applied to the Countess herself.

"Madam," said she, "I shall write to Mr. Dorrien to-day. May I ask what you wish me to say to him? You are the Comtesse d'Armaillé, the late Mr. George Dorrien's widow, and these children are——"

But the little Countess only burst into tears, and looked up at the ignored Mélanie, who, with her colour steadily rising, and with her lips compressing more and more, said, in anything but a placid voice,

"The eldest of these children is my brother's; the younger one is Mr. George Dorrien's."

"A boy?" eagerly said Mrs. Reginald, forgetting to address the Countess.

"A girl," shortly answered Mélanie.

Mrs. Reginald's face fell, and the light died out of her one dark eye.

"Ah!" she said. "Well, madam, I shall write to Mr. Dorrien. Is there any particular request you wish me to put to him?"

Mrs. Reginald was addressing the Countess again. Before she could reply, Mélanie's long pent-up wrath broke forth.

"Madame," she said, trembling with passion,

"the Comtesse d'Armaillé has no requests to address to Monsieur Dorrien. The Comtesse d'Armaillé came to her father-in-law's house to confer an honour, not to receive anything at his hands. The Comtesse—I mention it because you do not seem to know it—is a rich woman. She has land upon land——"

"And plantations upon plantations," put in the little Countess, with a touch of boastful pride.

"Her daughter, Mademoiselle d'Armaillé, is an heiress," resumed the angry Mélanie; "her other daughter, Antoinette," she added, with a touch of contempt, "will be poor comparatively with her sister."

"But I am sure Marie will be kind to little Antony," plaintively said the little Countess.

"Of course she will," resumed Mélanie; "they are not equals in birth, but still they are sisters, and——"

"Excuse me," interrupted Mrs. Reginald. "These two poor children look quite worn out; perhaps, though not equals in birth, they will each take a basin of this hot broth," she added, turning towards the man-servant, who came in

with a tray, on which two white basins were steaming.

But Mélanie stepped in between the man and the children. She tightened her lips, and looked almost fiercely at Mrs. Reginald.

"Do these children stay here or not?" she asked, imperiously.

Mrs. Reginald turned to the Countess and said kindly, "What will you take, madam? You look very cold."

"Oh, I am *so* cold," said the little Countess, shivering. "Perhaps some hot coffee——"

Mélanie did not allow her to proceed. Seizing the tray from the servant's hands, she dashed it with its contents on Mr. Dorrien's Turkey carpet; then, going up to the little Countess, she seized her arm, and between her set teeth she said, "Come!"

The Countess rose, looking frightened, but not attempting to resist. Indeed, Mélanie's wrath acted with the awful rapidity of a whirlwind. The man-servant started back in dismay as he saw the broth spreading on the Turkey carpet; the mulatto girl hurried out of the room with a scared face; little Marie, clinging to her

skirts, looked back at her aunt with frightened eyes; the nurse, without even trying to hush the baby, who screamed fearfully, walked off as fast as she could; the negro-boy, still holding the doll, scampered headlong downstairs; and the servant-girl, picking up her parcels, which she had laid down at the door, looked at Mrs. Reginald, as if expecting attack and retaliation from that lady; but Mrs. Reginald stood perfectly still, watching the retreat of her vanquished foe.

"Come," said Mélanie again, "you do not stay here to be insulted."

"No, I do not stay here to be insulted," said the little Countess, nodding with much stateliness at Mrs. Reginald.

But that lady only shook her head at the young creature, and looking down at her of one side with her bright eye, she only said, "Poor thing!"

"You have not been received as the Comtesse d'Armaillé should be received," said Mélanie, seizing her hand and leading her to the door.

"No," repeated the Countess, drawing herself up, "I have not been received as the Comtesse d'Armaillé should be received."

"Poor little thing!" ejaculated Mrs. Reginald, shaking her head again over the little widow.

"And Monsieur Dorrien shall hear of all this," said Mélanie, looking as if she would have liked to do Mrs. Reginald some bodily injury.

"Perhaps, madam, you will kindly favour me with that lady's name," remarked Mrs. Reginald, addressing the Comtesse, who now stood on the threshold of the drawing-room. "Mr. Dorrien would like to know who flung the broth on his carpet, I daresay."

The Countess did not answer, and hastened on, but her sister-in-law turned on Mrs. Reginald, and said defiantly,

"My name is Mélanie, and, though I was Count d'Armaillé's sister, I have not and never had any other name. You have put the question because, somehow or other, you knew this; and depend upon it that, if we ever meet again, I shall remember it for you."

She lifted up a threatening forefinger to Mrs. Reginald, who raised her eyebrows in supercilious surprise, and, almost thrusting the little Countess down before her, she walked downstairs. Mrs. Reginald gravely followed, but did

not go beyond the head of the *perron*; thence she surveyed the exodus of the invaders. They entered the railway omnibus in the court; the driver, who had been unloading the baggage, had, to his great disgust, to hoist it up again. Mrs. Reginald looked calmly on, seeming to take a world of interest in the trunks, boxes, and bags of the little Countess. A discreet cough at her elbow made her turn round.

"Oh, you are there, Mr. Brown," said she.

"My dear madam, I have been there all the time," replied Mr. Brown.

"In—deed! Well, I am short-sighted, for I never saw you."

"Well, you see, ladies," a gentle cough; "ladies are so—so impetuous."

"Nonsense!"

"No—really it is not—really it is not nonsense, Mrs. Reginald; and, indeed, I am in great doubt as to how Mr. Dorrien will feel in this matter. The lady was his son's wife, and the child is his son's child."

Mrs. Reginald measured him from head to foot; then from his toe-tips to his bald crown her one eye travelled again.

"Mr. Brown," she said, austerely, "you are perfectly free to ask that lady, and her sister-in-law, and her children, and her servants, and the negro boy, and the doll, to remain here till Mr. Dorrien comes back. Only if you do so"—Mr. Brown hastened to protest that he had no such intentions—"only if you do so," continued Mrs. Reginald, ignoring his protest, "it is your doing, not mine."

It is almost needless to say that Mr. Brown had no wish to do anything of the kind, and that Mr. Dorrien's daughter-in-law, grandchild, and suite drove out of the court undetained by him. He did, indeed, go up to the door of the omnibus and civilly ask the Comtesse to favour him with her address. This request the intractable Mélanie received with a slam of the door in his face; that made Mr. Brown start back amazed; that filled Mrs. Reginald's stern heart with satisfaction; and that sent Durand and Leroux, peeping from behind the green curtain of the counting-house window, into ecstasies of delight, which had not subsided when Mr. Dorrien's clerk returned to them and to his official duties.

Two days later Mr. Dorrien came home. He received Mrs. Reginald's account of what had occurred with his usual impassive countenance, merely saying,

"Of course, Mrs. Reginald, I attach no blame to you; but if I had been at home, my son's widow and her child should not have left my house so."

"And if *I* had been at home," tartly answered Mrs. Reginald, shooting a rather defiant glance with her bright eye at him, "they should have received another welcome than that which I gave them."

Mr. Dorrien waved his hand—it was very delicate and fair, though rather thin—in a graceful, deprecating fashion, and said, in his courteous way, "Of course, of course;" then, leaving Mrs. Reginald—for this conversation took place immediately on his arrival,—he repaired to Mr. Brown's private rooms.

"Well, Mr. Brown," he said, as that gentleman rose and they shook hands—Mr. Dorrien did sometimes call him Brown, but it was very rarely indeed that he did so—"well, Mr. Brown, I have seen Mrs. Reginald and heard all about

it. It is a pity, but it could not be helped, I suppose. Only will you be kind enough to make some inquires about that poor young thing? She came from Mauritius—the Consul—we know the Consul there, do we not?—a Mr. Sinclair—yes, I am sure his name is Sinclair—well, he will tell us all about her."

Mr. Brown took a note to that effect.

"I also think," said Mr. Dorrien, after a pause, "that until we have the Consul's answer we will let the matter rest, Mr. Brown. And now, how have things been going on whilst I was away?"

But Mr. Brown had nothing of importance or interest to tell his master. Business was dull—when did men of business ever find business otherwise? Nevertheless, two new houses in the provinces wanted to deal with them, but he (Mr. Brown) thought that there was no need to be in a hurry. Had Mr. Brown any objection to them? asked Mr. Dorrien, with sudden interest. Oh! no; but still, Mr. Brown thought there need be no hurry. And so the conversation drifted away from the Countess and her child, and returned to them no more.

Mr. Sinclair was written to, and in due course of time Mr. Sinclair's answer came. The Comtesse d'Armaillé had been Miss O'Donnell, wrote the Consul. She was an orphan and an heiress, and had been married at fifteen to the Comte d'Armaillé, who was forty, penniless, and profligate. He beat and ill-used his little wife, who, soon after his death, contracted a private marriage with Mr. Dorrien's son; but how George Dorrien had come to Mauritius, and what he had been doing there, Mr. Sinclair prudently professed not to know. "No good," mentally said Mrs. Reginald, when she came to this portion of the letter.

The birth of her second child compelled the Countess to acknowledge her marriage; this acknowledgment, Mr. Sinclair confessed, led to some unpleasantness, and George Dorrien, after a while, determined upon going to Europe. That his young wife soon followed him, Mr. Sinclair knew—also that she had not returned to Mauritius. But there closed the information he could give. Mr. Dorrien made no comment upon any of the particulars thus conveyed to him, but he instructed Mr. Brown to take the

needful steps in order to discover the Countess's whereabouts.

This, however, proved more difficult than writing to Mr. Sinclair. A young widow with two children, a companion, and several servants, were not, it would seem, very hard to find out; but, somehow or other, Mr. Brown could not do it. He ascertained that the Countess had left Paris, and gone to Italy. But when he had discovered that Sorrento was the place of her residence, he also learned, almost immediately afterwards, that she was gone to Germany. From Germany the Countess went to Belgium, thence to England, and thence to Belgium back again; and so she seemed to wander about Europe, never staying long enough anywhere for Mr. Dorrien to make any attempt to communicate with her. Once, indeed, when she was wintering in Rome, Mr. Dorrien wrote to her, but his letter was sent back to him by return of post.

"Mr. Brown," quietly said Mr. Dorrien to the clerk, "you will take no more steps in this matter, if you please."

Mr. Brown accordingly troubled himself no

more with the wanderings of the Countess, and quietly informed Mrs. Reginald that it was really quite a relief to have that matter disposed of.

The relief lasted several years, at the end of which Mr. Dorrien received two letters. One, edged with black, bore the post-mark of Nice; the other came from England. They were evidently not business-letters, for Mr. Dorrien said not a word of their contents to Mr. Brown—not, at least, for two days after receiving them. Even then he was silent concerning the letter from Nice, and all he said of the English letter was, "Mr. Brown, you remember John Dorrien?"

Imperturbable though Mr. Brown was, he gave a little start. It was so many years since the name of John Dorrien had been mentioned in that house.

"Yes, sir, I remember Mr. John Dorrien," answered Mr. Brown, after a moment's pause.

"Well, it seems that his widow is living somewhere in, or about, London, and that John Dorrien's boy has been brought up at Saint Ives, and is a very clever young fellow."

"I am sure I am very glad to hear it, sir."

"So am I, Mr. Brown."

Two days later Mr. Dorrien said, in the same careless way:

"Oh, by-the-by, Mr. Brown, I have written to Mrs. John Dorrien."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes, I wrote this morning."

Mr. Dorrien said no more; Mr. Brown put no questions; but the letter which Mr. Dorrien had written and sent that morning was that which Mrs. Dorrien had placed into John Dorrien's hand.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. DORRIEN never wasted words, spoken or written, In his letter to Mrs. Dorrien he now implied, briefly, what it was not convenient to explain at any length. After gliding over the long break in their intercourse as gracefully as if it had lasted sixteen days instead of so many years, he alluded to John Dorrien. He was charmed to learn that he was a young man of promise, and congratulated her kindly; but he ventured to ask of his dear Mrs. Dorrien if the place of his father's son, of the last of the Dorriens after himself, was not by his side in the old house! Should a stranger be called in to become his successor, and one who did not bear the old name be held worthy of steering the "Dorrien" on her way down the tide of time? A slight allusion to Mr. Blackmore, also to the size of the Hôtel Dorrien, which would

render any domestic arrangement easy, and a request for a prompt reply, concluded Mr. Dorrien's epistle.

John had read this letter in total silence, without one exclamation of surprise, or one comment of approval or blame. He returned it to his mother without uttering a word, but with sorrowful gravity in his face.

So he, John Dorrien, the poor and obscure lad, was the last of those great and rich Dorriens whom Mr. Blackmore had first mentioned to him! He was mortified to find, being of a proud and independent spirit, that he actually thought somewhat more of himself for this connexion. Was he not the same John Dorrien who had got up that morning resolved to strive for self-won honours? But this was not all. He felt cut to the heart by his mother's long secrecy, and thoroughly indignant with that rich Mr. Dorrien who, after putting them by so many years, now coolly took them up again. Mrs. Dorrien sat with the letter in her hand, striving to read the meaning of her son's face. The pale gleam of an English sun was stealing into the room, and lit up the spot on which the

boy stood. She saw the gold shining in his brown hair, the pure blood in his clear cheek, but his grave eyes and compressed lips gave her no clue to his feelings.

"John," she said, after what seemed to both a long pause of silence, "I told you so; Mr. Dorrien's letter concerns you, and not me. You will have to give it time and thought and—"

"Little mother," interrupted John, leaving his place to go and sit down by her, "I require little time or thought to answer Mr. Dorrien. I do not know if I ought to feel obliged to him for the position he offers me, but I do not."

And John threw back his head in defiance of Mr. Dorrien, La maison Dorrien, commerce and fortune. His mother gave him a wistful look.

"If there be a meaning in language," she said, "Mr. Dorrien means to leave his business to you; and the firm of Dorrien has always been a great firm, and a rich one."

"What was my father in it?" asked John.

"What Mr. Dorrien is now, John."

She said no more. Her son could see that she said this much with reluctance. How or why his father's position had passed to Mr.

George Dorrien was evidently not a pleasant subject to the widowed lady. "That Mr. Dorrien has wronged my father," thought John, his grey eyes flashing, and his secret resolve was strengthened.

"Well, little mother," resumed John, coolly, "I have no taste for the Aladdin's Lamp which Mr. Dorrien, who has forgotten us so long, now offers. I will, God willing, climb my way up my own ladder, and trust me, little mother." He added, passing his arm round her, and looking fondly in her face, "Though the rungs of my ladder may not be made of gold—his are, I suppose—they will afford me footing firm and sure, and lead to what shall be very good for us both."

Mrs. Dorrien almost bit her tongue, in order not to make some rejoinder which John might deem unkind. She saw well enough that her docile little boy, her obedient Johnny, had vanished, and that the present John, though tender and devoted, was also very wilful, and thoroughly bent on having a way of his own. He did not even make a semblance of consulting her on so momentous a subject as this; he

took not the least pains to untie this Gordian knot; he coolly cut through it, and having done so, seemed to consider the matter disposed of.

"My dear," she said, after a pause, "think of what you are doing. If you reject this position, you may never again have such an opportunity."

"I trust not," quickly replied John. "I mean that I do not wish for the alternative. I do not care for money, little mother, but of course it is a temptation, especially just now; and since I must not yield to it, I would rather not be tempted."

Then it was a temptation. Poor John's honest confession gave his mother sudden hope. Her colour rose, her dark eyes, which had grown so dim, got back their old light.

"My dear boy," she said, with a look of surprise, "this is no temptation to shrink from. What can you see so objectionable in Mr. Dorrien's proposal?"

She put the question; she could ask such a thing; she could forget his great dramatic poem, and the fame and fortune he was to build upon it. John coloured violently.

"Why, little mother," he exclaimed, in a tone of reproach, "what have I to do with business? I have not been seven years at Saint Ives for that. Besides, how could I go on with 'Miriam' if I were at Mr. Dorrien's? I suppose it is a fine position; but the mere thought of working from morning till night for money-making is abhorrent to me. I would not submit to such a yoke in order to become a millionaire."

Mrs. Dorrien smiled with some bitterness. She thought of the life she had led for sixteen years—how she, reared in comfort and wedded to wealth, had been her own servant, how she had worked herself almost blind, and learned to do without the comforts and often the necessaries of life for the sake of the boy who considered her so little, and himself so much. She had done it, and not complained, but had she liked it?

"You will think over it," she said, a little coldly, though with a heightened colour.

John shook his head, and almost laughed.

"I have thought over it," he said, "and my mind is made up. I will not sit on a stool in Mr. Dorrien's office, and lead the life he leads.

We may not be very rich, little mother, but we shall soon have a comfortable home of our own, I trust. I shall see about 'Miriam' to-day, and the result will show you, I hope, that I have decided wisely."

"John, I believe you are very gifted," Mrs. Dorrien spoke emphatically; "but even great gifts are not acknowledged at once. You may meet with checks which will make you regret having been so hasty with Mr. Dorrien."

If it had not been for her present and pressing needs, Mrs. Dorrien would have let this matter rest, and trusted to time for her ally. Little though she knew of literature, she knew enough of life and its inevitable disappointments to look at it from another point of view than that of sanguine John; but she had not time to wait. Her position was bitter and critical. John could not return to Saint Ives, to plunge more deeply into this poetic abyss. Indeed, that he should dream of becoming a real poet, and look to poetry for his bread and her own, was a sort of insanity. She felt angry with his madness, and all the more so that she was in some measure answerable for it. Why

had she given him the education of all others most likely to foster literary tastes and faculties? She had done it, and she felt that she could not now undo it too quickly and too surely. Her argument, however, only seemed to make John restive. He was still too much of a boy not to have plenty of combativeness in him. The mere thought of fighting his way up, spite publishers and critics, was delightful to the lad. It would give sweetness to victory to have had a preliminary wrestling. He could not help smiling at the thought; and in the smile his mother read that she had defeated her own object, and must change her tactics.

"Besides," she resumed, gravely, "you must consider Mr. Dorrien's kindness in this, John. Is it not making a poor return for it not even to give his offer the trial, say of six months, or a year, just to see how you would like that sort of life?"

"Consider Mr. Dorrien!" echoed John, amazed and displeased. "Why, mother, I did not like to complain of him, since you did not, but what consideration has he shown for us all these years? Has he remembered us? Has he

sought us, or made a serious effort to find us? Then what consideration do I owe him now?"

Mrs. Dorrien shook her head impatiently.

"Young people do not understand," she said, in a fretful tone. "But you are right in one thing, John, since I do not complain, you should not do so."

"But I do not, little mother, I only prefer my own way to Mr. Dorrien's."

John laughed the short, independent laugh of ever-presumptuous youth. Mrs. Dorrien was silent again, and pondered. What should she say next?—what argument should she use? She might tell John that she wished for this thing and bid him do it for her sake, and though the lad might have made another stand for the liberty and the sweetness of his life, he would probably have yielded, for he had a generous nature, and he loved her. But Mrs. Dorrien was proud, she was accustomed to bestow upon John, not to receive from him; she could not bear to humble herself so far before her son, even though the object she had in view was certainly his welfare, and not her own; moreover, and though she was not an untruthful

woman, in the hardest sense of the word, she was not very fond of the straight, open high road, and preferred little devious paths of her own. She thought them short cuts, but they were very long rounds sometimes, and led her through much bitterness and sorrow to the goal she wished to reach. Mrs. Dorrien liked them, however, and rather than tell John plainly what she wished him to do, she now inflicted on herself keen and bitter pain.

"John," she said, after a pause, "I believe you see I wish you to accept Mr. Dorrien's proposal."

"I know, mother, that if you do, it is for my sake," said John, colouring.

"Of course it is for your sake; but I have other reasons of which you know nothing, John, and it is only fair to myself, as well as to Mr. Dorrien, that you should know them. John, have you nothing more to ask about your father?"

"I have no wish to ask what you have no wish to tell," said the youth, gravely.

"And how could I wish to tell that which was so bitter for me to repeat, so hard for you

to hear?" she cried, with sudden passion. "I suppose I must tell you now; but, John, listen, and do not question. I will say all that is needful, but I have not fortitude enough to say more. I had a little fortune of my own when I married your father. He had the firm of Dorrien, La Maison Dorrien, as they called it in Paris, and call it still, I daresay. His grandfather willed it to him, but his first cousin, Mr. George Dorrien, did not thereby lose his share. He was what is called a sleeping partner. He had neither the tastes nor the position of a man of business; he married an heiress, and was to be a country gentleman. Oh! John, it is so hard to say the rest."

John looked wistfully at his mother, tears flowed down her pale cheeks, her lips quivered, her whole being seemed shaken.

"Do not tell me, little mother," he said, generously. "I will take your word for it all."

"No, I must tell," said she. "I have begun, I must go on. A few words will do. John, your father was very, very unfortunate, more sinned against than sinning, but before you were a year old my money was gone, your

father's share was gone, and Mr. George Dorrien's share had vanished. The firm of Dorrien, which had lasted a century, must have perished, and been utterly disgraced, but for Mrs. George Dorrien's money. That saved it, but your father, your poor father, John, died by his own hand."

She buried her face in her hands, whilst John, pale and sorrow-stricken, said not a word.

"I could not bear to tell you," she said, looking up. "I would never have told you, if I could—never have darkened your mind, my poor boy, with so sad a story, if I could have helped it."

"You were wrong, mother," said John, speaking almost sternly, and his very lips were white, "you were wrong. We are all of us willing enough to take the honour that comes to us from our parents—we must also learn how to take the shame."

"But it was not shame!" cried Mrs. Dorrien, her face in a flame. "I told you that your father was more sinned against than sinning. He was involved before he knew how or why, and in his sensitiveness and over-conscientiousness

he could not bear to see the ruin he had wrought. Mr. George Dorrien, though he suffered so severely, never reproached him; the world never thought your poor father other than unfortunate."

John did not answer, but he was not convinced. He was naturally rigid in his ideas of honour, and being young, he was severe in his judgments of men. His mother's revelation had given him a terrible shock. The father whom she had always mentioned as so perfect and accomplished a gentleman, whose mild, refined face now looked down at him from the wall—that father had died by his own hand, and his mother might say what she liked, he had so died because he could not face dishonour. Nothing could, nor ever did, remove that bitter conviction from his soul; but never was it so bitter as in that first hour.

"You must not set yourself up as a judge against your own father," said Mrs. Dorrien, almost angrily. "Mr. Dorrien, who suffered so much through him, never reproached him, and yet, John, he did suffer. He hated business as much as you do, and he had to yoke himself to

it. He had meant to lead a country life, and he had to shut himself up in a great city. Do you wonder that I shrank from him, and purposely let my track be lost? And if he seeks us now, do you wonder that I urge you to please him, and think he has a claim upon you?"

John was silent. He was going through the pangs of a great mental agony. Undeserved shame was bearing him down to the earth. It seemed to him as if his very pride in the name he bore were gone from him—as if he cared no more for fame, for glory, for the honour of beautiful verse; but keenly though he suffered, he had too generous a nature to let his mother know all his feelings.

"Little mother," he said, sorrowfully, "I do not set myself up as a judge against my own father, nor do I wish to reproach his memory."

"Do not," she said, almost passionately—"never do that, John, however hard the cost of the past may be to you."

He could not misunderstand her meaning. His mother considered him bound by that fatal past to accede to Mr. Dorrien's request. And for once they were agreed; John, though he did not say it, thought so too. His eyes sought

that pale portrait on the wall, and spoke to it in tender, silent language. That erring man was his father, after all, and John Dorrien shrank from none of the claims the name and bond implied. He took up his heavy inheritance, not gladly, but in a stoic spirit. He had once thought that honour would go back through him to his dead father, and so it would, but through another channel than that which he had dreamed of. The late John Dorrien was not to be the father of a great poet, but his son was to take up the load which the broken-hearted man had laid down, and to redeem his tarnished honour. All these thoughts and feelings passed through him as he looked at the portrait and listened to his mother, but John Dorrien did not speak.

"And now," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, "you know all—I have no more to say—no more to urge. You can think over Mr. Dorrien's proposal, and answer it when you please."

"Mother," asked John, with sorrowful gravity, "what use can I be of to Mr. Dorrien?—what can I do that another would not do as well?"

"You ask it—you can ask it?" she said, clasping her hands almost indignantly. "Are

you not a Dorrien?—do you not bear the old name, and is there not something in a name? And does not Mr. Dorrien know that you have been reared at Saint Ives—that you have studied there, and always been the first?"

"We did not study commerce," replied John, giving his mother a wistful look; for Virgil, Homer, Tacitus, and Cicero, the sweetness and grandeur of song, the stateliness of history, the beauty of eloquence, came back to him as he spoke, and smote him with their lost splendour and loveliness.

"I think Mr. Dorrien right in wishing for you," emphatically said Mrs. Dorrien; "but whether he be right or wrong, it is for you to consider these words of his letter: 'Is not the place of his father's son here by my side in the old house?'"

A sharp pang pierced poor John's heart. He was but a boy, after all, and did not know how to defend himself. His mother was too much for him, with that sad story in the past, and that claim of honour in the present. He did not know how to resist her, or how to fight his way out of that net which had so suddenly closed round him; but he found it very hard to

yield, and to give up the life he loved, the future he had hoped for, at the word of a stranger.

"Mother," he said, "don't you think that, if I explain to Mr. Dorrien that my tastes and education unfit me for this position——"

"Oh, of course," she bitterly interrupted, "Mr. Dorrien will not urge the point, but I know what he will think."

John bit his lip. That little taunt carried the day. "Very well," he said, "let it be; but it is hard."

He could not prevent his lips from quivering. His mother embraced him fondly, and told him that God would bless and reward him; but though John repelled neither heavenly blessing nor reward, he could not say to himself that either was his motive for submission. He was obeying a stern voice, keener and more subtle than that of conscience, the voice of Honour. He would have thought it dishonourable in his father's son to act otherwise than as he was now acting. Mr. George Dorrien had taken up a heavy load sixteen years ago, but John would not shrink now from his share of the burden.

But though John was imaginative, and could rush upon sacrifice with the fond illusions of

youth, to whom heroism always seems so easy; though he was gentle-hearted, and could not mistrust where he loved, he was also shrewd, and giving his mother a wistful, perplexed look, he said to her: "Little mother, does not all this seem very strange to you?"

That look and his evident sorrow tried Mrs. Dorrien strangely; but she would not give in. With feverish eagerness she completed her triumph by writing off at once to Mr. Dorrien. Her letter was brief, but decisive. She showed it to John, who read and returned it silently. He wished for no reprieve, but he could not help feeling that none was granted to him. Mrs. Dorrien went and posted the letter at once. When she came in, she found Johnny seated at the table, his hand buried in his brown locks, his eyes riveted on the loose pages before him. Yet he was not reading, he was only going back to some happy hours spent out upon the cliffs of the French coast, with the swarthy, ardent, and enthusiastic Mr. Ryan. He was only hearing once more those deep emphatic words, the sweetest that had yet fallen upon his ears: "John, my boy, that is grand," and he was asking himself, with dull and sad wonder, what Mr.

Ryan would say. His mother went up to him and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"My dear," she said fondly, "it is hard, I know, but you are not the one to do things by halves. Remember Lot's wife; there is temptation and peril in looking back. If you are to become a man of business, you cannot go on with poetry. Take these verses of yours, make them up into a packet, and seal it. When you have won a position, when perhaps you are sole master of the Dorrien firm, you can open this packet again, and indulge yourself to your heart's content."

She expected remonstrance and opposition, but though John gave a little start as she made this bold proposal, and looked at her with strange earnestness, he did not prevent her from carrying out her purpose. He let her gather up his papers, fold them neatly, and seal them up for him; and he took them thus sealed from her hand, and put them away silently. But silence is often the gravestone under which some of our saddest thoughts lie buried, and John Dorrien's thought now was: "Surely all this is my mother's doing."

CHAPTER X.

AS usual, Mr. Brown had gone up to Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room, and as usual he had found that lady warming her toes at the fire, leaning back in her rocking-chair, and holding up a volume so that the light of the lamp on the table near her might fall upon the page; and though Mrs. Reginald was not handsome, she made a very pleasant, warm, and comfortable picture as she sat thus.

Mrs. Reginald was not merely a great reader, but finding life dull at Hôtel Dorrien, and not being one to rely upon others for amusement, she turned to books. She chose them both grave and gay. She had, as she said herself, a healthy appetite, and could digest good food of any kind. She liked Dickens, she liked Shakespeare, she liked history, science in a light way,

metaphysics when they agreed with her own views, and the last novel when it was a good one. In short, Mrs. Reginald had a vigorous mind, and did not let it rust. When Mr. Brown taking a chair and softly rubbing his hands before Mrs. Reginald's cheerful fire, now remarked that she was reading, he meant it as the statement of a fact, not as a question, for he was accustomed to find her so engaged; but Mrs. Reginald's one eye was down upon him directly.

"Ah! you want to know what I am reading," said she. "Where is the use? You never read novels or fiction of any kind. Did you ever read fairy tales, Mr. Brown, when you were a little boy in a round jacket? But were you ever a little boy? Of course not; and of course there never were any fairies for you. But I am Irish, and the fairies and I are first cousins. I always liked them, pretty little midges, skipping about in the moonlight. And I still like fairy tales, Mr. Brown; for they all come straight from Fairyland—which is a very delightful country."

Mr. Brown coughed discreetly. Mrs. Regi-

nald was a superior woman, and, because she was so, had flights of fancy.

"What sort of a place do you think it is, Mr. Brown?" said she, not considering his cough as an answer, and turning her bright eye upon him, as if expectant of one.

"I think that is Mr. Dorrien," replied Mr. Brown, *sotto voce.*

And Mr. Dorrien it was who now entered the room; Mr. Dorrien, graceful, courteous, languid, and refined, as usual, but Mr. Dorrien far more than usually communicative and pleasant. Taking a chair between the two (they sat on opposite sides of the fire), Mr. Dorrien told them all he had been doing that day; how he and Mr. Plummer had made two ineffectual attempts to meet, and had not accomplished their object; and also how he, Mr. Dorrien, had been to the Hôtel de Ville on business, and had been more than usually disgusted with the arbitrary insolence of the man in office there. Then followed a remark on the weather, which was cold; then another on Mrs. Reginald's looks—which were the looks of health, he averred; then gliding gracefully as ever into the subject which had

brought him to Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room, he said quietly:

"By-the-by, my dear Madame, Mrs. John Dorrien and her son will be coming here shortly. I can trust their rooms to you, I am sure. By their rooms I mean a portion of this large house—a limited one, of course—to be set apart for their use. They do not come as visitors, but as permanent residents."

A profound silence followed this announcement. Mrs. John Dorrien and her son! Mrs. Reginald remembered him a baby in his widowed mother's arms, and mentally calculated his age; but she asked aloud if the rooms on this floor would do. Mr. Dorrien assured her they were the very thing, and turning to Mr. Brown, he said, with studied carelessness,

"We are going to have an assistant, Mr. Brown. I thought it well to secure this young John Dorrien. He is a lad of promise, and he has the name and youth which we both want, Mr. Brown," added Mr. Dorrien, with a rather dreary smile.

"Is he not very young, sir?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Twenty or so, I believe."

"He is seventeen," positively said Mrs. Reginald.

"Well, then, he will be twenty three years hence," laughed Mr. Dorrien.

Mr. Brown looked rather grave.

"I suppose he comes to learn business," he remarked.

"He comes to learn this business," said Mr. Dorrien, almost sharply; "he comes to work here—to help us, and to bear his share of the load."

"He is very young," said Mr. Brown, stroking his chin and looking at his master.

"He has the name of Dorrien, Mr. Brown—that will do for nine out of ten; he is clever--the first at Saint Ives."

"They learn Greek and Latin there, sir," persisted Mr. Brown, evidently not favourably impressed by the prospect of having a youthful scholar from Saint Ives in the counting-house of La Maison Dorrien.

"They learn mathematics, too, and algebra, and twenty things besides, which open a young man's mind to the practical side of life. At all

events," added Mr. Dorrien, "we can give the lad a trial."

Mr. Brown raised no further objection. He looked stolidly at the fire; and Mrs. Reginald, turning her brown eye first on him, then on Mr. Dorrien, drew her own conclusions on what she had just heard. She was both amazed and perplexed. Clerks of seventeen were surely abundant enough in Paris and London that John Dorrien should be left where he was, as he had been left these sixteen years. What, then, did Mr. Dorrien want him for that he brought his mother to the house in order to secure him? He had the name, but why should Mr. Dorrien require a boy's name? Mr. Brown did not like the plan; and his master, foreseeing that he would not like it, had chosen to tell him nothing about it till the matter was decided beyond recall. And he had come this evening to Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room to tell him, in order that her presence might stifle, if it could not silence, the confidential clerk's opposition.

"He has always been a wilful man, in his quiet way," thought Mrs. Reginald, looking shrewdly at Mr. Dorrien's pale, languid face,

"and a selfish man in his own civil way, and so he will be to the last."

"Perhaps the rooms on the ground-floor would do better than those up here," she suggested aloud, as if the rooms had been the subject of her silent meditations.

"No, not the rooms on the ground-floor," said Mr. Dorrien, quietly, but with perfect decision.

"They are very good rooms, Mr. Dorrien, and quite useless," persisted Mrs. Reginald.

"Mrs. John Dorrien will be better up here," coldly answered Mr. Dorrien, and, like Mr. Brown, Mrs. Reginald had nothing to do but to submit. Having settled this matter, Mr. Dorrien looked at his watch, exclaimed at the lateness of the hour, and rising, he bade both Mrs. Reginald and Mr. Brown a good evening.

"Well, Mr. Brown," said the lady, rushing impetuously into the subject as soon as the door had closed upon him, "are you knocked down, prostrate, on your back?—because I am! Mrs. John Dorrien here! And Mr. Dorrien talking of a boy of seventeen as if he really wanted him; and then these rooms on the ground-floor!

What is he keeping them up for? Mr. Brown, can you make it out?"

"I was not prepared for it," remarked Mr. Brown, ever close and cautious. "I was not prepared for it, Mrs. Reginald."

"You were not prepared for it! Nonsense! What do you think of it? Nothing, of course! Do you ever think, Mr. Brown?" added the vehement lady. "Shall I tell you what I think?" She paused. Mr. Brown looked up expectant. "Mr. Brown," resumed Mrs. Reginald, sarcastically, "I shall do as you do—I shall keep my thought to myself; but mark my words, Mr. Dorrien thinks himself very clever and very keen, but no good will come of it—no good will come of it."

Mr. Brown looked at the fire and rubbed his hands, and shunned the look of Mrs. Reginald's keen bright eye. But it was the misfortune of that lady that she could rarely keep her own counsel, or adhere to her wisest resolves. It was impossible for her to withhold from Mr. Brown that information which he most probably did not require, but which would at least convince him that she, Mrs. Reginald, was too acute to be imposed upon.

"Mr. Brown," she resumed, "do you hear me?"

"Yes, Mrs. Reginald, I am attending."

"Do you remember that passage in the history of Decebalus, King of the Daci—but, no, of course you do not. You never read, Mr. Brown."

"I read the newspaper, Mrs. Reginald."

"Well, then, this Decebalus, who could at one time of his history ask Trajan to pay him tribute, and who, vanquished by that same Trajan, had to die by his own hand—this same king, I say, had some ups and downs in his life. Once he got into a fix. He was hard pushed by the Romans. They were coming on, on, on, Mr. Brown, with their legions in the van, their auguries, too, and their engineers, and architects, and hungry Roman citizens, panting for barbarian land, in the rear. They were coming on, I say, and the German tribes were not all friendly to this Danubian king. He had buried his treasure in the bed of the river, and murdered the slaves who had hidden it there; but, somehow or other, a voice went forth, even among his own people, that the Romans had

forced, or would force, the iron gates, and that Decebalus was ended. Now, shall I tell you what I think he did, Mr. Brown? Well, I think he hunted out for some little Decebalus or other, and proclaimed him his successor in the face of the Daci. Whether he had him raised and borne aloft on a shield, Frankish fashion, is more than I can tell you, but one thing I am sure of, that he did it to blind his people. 'What,' says Decebalus, 'you think the Romans are pushing me close, do you? You think I have buried my treasures, and am preparing for death or flight! You think that a little more, and I shall be a dethroned sovereign! *You never were more mistaken!* Why, my kingdom is so sure a thing that, in my anxiety for it, and for my people, I have actually chosen this boy my successor. Would I choose a successor if I had nothing to bequeath?—and would I hit upon a boy if there were danger coming on? Bless you, I never sat better in my saddle than I do this day.' Now, Mr. Brown, Decebalus may say what he pleases, but such Daci as you and I know better than to believe him. We know that Decebalus never thought of anyone save

Number One; that he would not have given a farthing for that poor little Decebalus to be alive or dead, and that Dacia and the Daci might all go to perdition, so far as *he* cared. I say *we* know it. And now, Mr. Brown," added Mrs. Reginald, tapping Mr. Brown on the waistcoat, and fixing him with her one bright eye, "what do you think of my parable?"

Mr. Brown coughed. He thought that Mrs. Reginald was a very acute, but also a very dangerous woman.

"As to what became of the young Decebalus," resumed Mrs. Reginald, "whether he followed the triumphal car of Trajan, or was murdered by the Daci, let us not inquire. Decebalus did not care—of that we may be sure, poor boy, poor boy!" And folding her arms across her heart, Mrs. Reginald nodded sadly over the fate of this imaginary Decebalus junior.

Mr. Brown began to feel alarmed.

"My dear madam," said he, almost anxiously, "I hope—I trust—I mean, that you do not make such remarks, such comments indiscriminately, you know?"

Mrs. Reginald looked offended, and tartly in-

formed Mr. Brown that she had reached years of discretion.

"My dear madam, I never doubted it. I only feared lest people might take these little flights of fancy for actual facts—facts, you know. Now let me tell you, quite between ourselves, that Mr. Dorrien's business was never more flourishing, more extensive, than it is now."

"My dear Mr. Brown," exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, with sarcastic emphasis, "did I ever doubt it?"

They looked hard at each other; then Mr. Brown too discovered that it was late, and bidding Mrs. Reginald a good evening, took his leave.

"As if I did not know," said Mrs. Reginald to herself. "Poor boy! I would not have given up mine, not I; but that Mrs. John Dorrien was always a foolish woman—a foolish woman," said Mrs. Reginald, who, spite of some passages in her own life, thought herself a wise one.

A week later Mr. Dorrien drove in his carriage to the station of the *chemin de fer du Nord*, and brought home John Dorrien and his mother.

As they passed under the arched gateway, and entered the old courtyard, he alighted first, and said with a smile, "You are welcome."

The afternoon was calm and golden. There was sun above the old house, and cool shade in the court. The tall chimney stacks of the high roof rose on the blue sky, where a few last swallows were wheeling with shrill cries, as if rejoicing that they were departing for the south. All else was silent, and the quaint tranquil look of the place, a look of grey age without decay, impressed John Dorrien with the pathetic beauty which clings around the old homes of man. And John knew that this home, if it had not been reared by men of Dorrien blood, had yet sheltered his forefathers for several generations. It had been their refuge in days of storm, their fortress during war-time, and once or twice the field on which the battle of life or death had to be fought by them. In that battle, John Dorrien's father had been worsted. To that house the conquered man had been brought back cold and lifeless. These steps which she now went up, leaning on the arm of her son, the sorrowing widow had

descended with her orphan baby in her arms, her eyes dimmed with weeping, her head bowed with humiliation; and this boy, the last of the Dorriens, was to take the family standard in his turn, and carry it in the heat of battle, and fight for its honour, as others had fought before him. There was pride to both in the thought. Mrs. Dorrien walked up the steps of the *perron* with the look of one who takes possession; and the deep grey eyes of her son sparkled as he sprang up by her side. The sacrifice had been a bitter one, but it was over, or John thought that it was. He felt ready to look at his new life with all the fervid illusions of youth, and to survey with family pride the birthplace to which he was now returning. As they entered the hall, and Mr. Brown and Mrs. Reginald both came to meet them, John thought more of a green glimpse of the garden, which he caught through an open door, than of their welcome; but the sight of these two, of the old clerk whom she had known in her brief prosperity, of the relative whom she had first met in the early hours of her sorrow, was too much for the fortitude of Mrs. Dorrien. Mr. Dorrien saw her pale features

work, he felt the coming of a scene, and he hastened to avert the calamity.

"My dear Mrs. Reginald," he said, with his fluent courtesy, "will you kindly show Mrs. John Dorrien to her room. I can see the journey has been too much for her. Mr. Brown, my young cousin is casting longing eyes at your premises. I am sure he will not be happy unless he sees them by daylight."

Having thus civilly disposed of his two relatives, Mr. Dorrien, much relieved at being rid of them, repaired to his own sanctum, and there read quietly till the dinner-bell rang.

So long as Mr. Dorrien was by, Mrs. Dorrien succeeded in maintaining a sort of composure, but when, escorted by Mrs. Reginald only, she entered the rooms that had been prepared for her, she gave way, and, hiding her face in her hands, yielded to the bitterness of her sorrow. It was natural, and Mrs. Reginald thought and said so.

"But then, my dear," she added, resting her hand on Mrs. Dorrien's shoulder as she spoke, "you have your boy, and he seems a nice young fellow—yes, he really does."

She spoke kindly, but it is a mistake to suppose that people always like kindness; some resent it as another form of patronage, and of these Mrs. Dorrien was inclined to be one. It seemed so bitter to enter this old house again, and to be a guest, not mistress; to be received and shown to these rooms on the second floor by Mrs. Reginald, whom she had never liked, instead of choosing rooms according to her own taste; and Mrs. Reginald did not lessen the hardship by praising her son, John, Mr. Dorrien's heir-apparent, in that tone.

"My son is all that I can wish him to be," she said, raising her bowed head and checking her tears; "all that Mr. Dorrien can even expect from him in the position to which he has called him."

Mrs. Reginald withdrew her hand.

"I hope the rooms are to your liking, Mrs. John?" she said, drily.

"Oh! they are very well, thank you," languidly replied Mrs. Dorrien, who did not like being called Mrs. John; "but who occupies the rooms on the ground-floor now?"

"No one."

"If it makes no difference to Mr. Dorrien, I

should prefer them to these," continued Mrs. Dorrien, in the same languid manner.

"Mr. Dorrien himself appointed these for you, Mrs. John."

"He is very kind," said Mrs. Dorrien; "but I know—and it is an unspeakable comfort to me to know it, Mrs. Reginald—that my dear boy will more than fulfil his expectations."

Mrs. Reginald put her head to one side and looked curiously at the widow with her one bright eye. It entertained and saddened her to see this foolish mother either labouring under this infatuation, or, if not herself deceived, trying, at least, to deceive others. "Surely this Mrs. John knew 'our Mr. Dorrien,' if any one did. And surely, knowing him, she could not be quite blind!" So reasoned Mrs. Reginald within her own mind—and not wrongly.

Mrs. Dorrien did know her late husband's cousin very well—so well that she had never applied to him through all her troubles. He was not hard, he was not unkind, but no one who knew Mr. Dorrien could expect much from him, or would care to ask him for aid. It was

only the strong pressure of necessity, and especially the dangerous influence of Miriam the Jewess, that had enlisted Mrs. Dorrien on his side against the dearest wishes of her son. If she had only had a little money, if John had not taken that perilous liking to blank verse, she would never have become a dependent, never have returned to this house. Moreover, she was not without some uneasiness—who could tell how it would all turn out? But she could not bear adding the bitterness of fear to the bitterness of memory, and she tried to blind herself a little, and others a good deal, and especially did she attempt riding the high horse over Mrs. Reginald, and assuming the tone and manner of mother to the Dorrien heir-apparent. Unfortunately for this wish of John's mother, Mrs. Reginald's mental vision was of the keenest order, and she was one whom assumption rarely deceived. She ignored Mrs. Dorrien's condescension, spoke no more of John, and simply said that Mr. Dorrien dined at seven. Mrs. Dorrien sighed, and did not think she should be able to appear at the dinner-table for this first evening. Mrs. Reginald, without pressing

or remonstrance, promised to send her in some dinner, and so left her.

Mrs. Dorrien glanced around her sitting-room with a dissatisfied air—she did not like its aspect. The court indeed!—what did she want to overlook the court for? Her bedroom and John's rooms were equally distasteful to her. They were too confined and low, to begin with—besides, Mrs. Dorrien was resolved to have the rooms on the ground-floor; they were lofty and spacious, and they opened on the garden; and, above all, Mrs. Dorrien liked them; she would mention the subject to Mr. Dorrien at dinner—for that he would send some message pressing her to go down, Mrs. Dorrien did not doubt; and in that belief she dressed herself leisurely, having kindly resolved to be persuaded below by Mr. Dorrien's entreaties.

But the dinner-bell rang, and no message came. John, indeed, rushed in to dress, and breathlessly lamented his mother's headache, of which he had heard through Mrs. Reginald. But he took her non-appearance for granted, and promising to come back as soon as he could, he rushed off again with the desperate hurry and

inexorable punctuality of a very young man.

Mrs. Dorrien felt vexed with John for making no effort to change her resolve, and for going down with that gay, airy look. Poor John! he could not help it. He had found it hard to give up his own way, but the thing was done, and he was too young, too buoyant and unselfish, to brood over his hardship. Besides, though his mother had sealed up "Miriam," he knew her by heart; and though he would have nothing to do with her in the day-time, could he not sit up with her at night, and would there not be a secret charm and sweetness in those stolen interviews? This was comfort, for one thing; but apart from this, was he not in Paris? Was not the city of the world before him, and had not Mr. Dorrien dropped a kind hint about not meaning to tie him down to work till he had had Paris out? And then the novelty of it all! That solemn, most amusing Mr. Brown! —that delightful Mrs. Reginald!—that peculiar, interesting Mr. Dorrien, with his pale look and languid ways; and that quaint, ancient house, in which he, John Dorrien, was actually born! Were not all these before him, as it were, to

study and make much of? But deeper than these feelings lay one of which he said nothing to his mother—the feeling that by his sacrifice he had ensured her comfort—that if he had to work hard, she who had so long worked hard for him might now take her well-earned rest. The thought made his young heart beat, filled it with a gladness which overflowed, and appeared in his sparkling grey eyes and happy voice. He was very sorry that his mother's head ached, but he was not alarmed about it, and gladness remained his prevailing feeling.

The outward signs of this rejoicing were all his mother saw, and she chafed to find that John Dorrien accepted his position so cheerfully. As she took her solitary dinner, and, when it was over, looked at the wood fire burning with a mild glow on the hearth, Mrs. Dorrien wondered at the ingratitude of young people, and that John did not seem to understand the sacrifice she had made in coming for his sake to Mr. Dorrien's house. And when John came back to her, his account of the dinner did not mend matters. At first she brightened to see him, and her brow cleared, and her

poor dim eyes lit at the aspect of her darling.

"How well you look, John!" she said—"not at all tired."

"Nor am I, little mother. You, too, look better. What a pleasant sitting-room this is! May I look at your bedroom? Why, I declare, little mother," said John, coming back to her with a beaming face, "your room is fit for a queen. Much handsomer than any of the rooms at Mr. Blackmore's. By-the-by, I wonder why Oliver has dropped me all at once, don't you? It is strange, is it not?"

Mrs. Dorrien coloured as she met the look of his honest eyes, for it was she who had begged of Mr. Blackmore to keep his son and John apart, "till it was all over."

"Tell me all about the dinner, dear," she said, hastily.

"Well, little mother," said John, standing by the fireplace, and thence looking down at her, "everyone was so sorry that you could not come down to dinner; but Mrs. Reginald said you were much too poorly to think of it."

"Mrs. Reginald is too kind," drily said Mrs. Dorrien.

"And I am in love with Mrs. Reginald, mother," resumed John, laughing mischievously. "Well, now, is she not glorious? She is so clever, so original, and so amusing. I shall enjoy her exceedingly, so shall I Mr. Brown. I am to be in his hands, you know, and to learn all the mysteries of envelopes and note-paper from him. What a wonderful business this seems to be!" added John, with sudden thoughtfulness. "Why, there is letter-paper here for all Europe, I do believe."

"It is a great house," replied Mrs. Dorrien, proudly.

"I saw the garden, too, and the statue of the old river-god, and I remembered what you told me, little mother. It all seems like a dream."

"What did Mr. Dorrien say?"

"Not much. He does not talk much, I fancy, but he seems willing to be kind. I am to study two hours a day, and work after that with Mr. Brown. If I have a gift for languages, I am to learn Russian! The library—a large one, it seems—is to be placed at my command, and I am to see Paris, and begin to-morrow. Shan't we go about together, little mother! Mr. Dorrien is fond of music, and will take me

to the Italian Opera, I think he said to-morrow night. And only think, little mother," added John, laughing, "you are to be Mrs. John—Mr. Dorrien said so."

Mrs. Dorrien, who had heard him with more and more impatience as he rattled on, here closed her eyes with so expressive a look of weariness that John asked with concern if her headache was worse. "Much worse," shortly answered his mother; whereupon he thought it best to leave her, and at once went to his own room. It was a plain room enough, but John admired it exceedingly. He felt excited, pleased, and happy. Business was all at once invested with a roseate hue, and the life before him lost its anticipated gloom. It was early yet; Mr. Dorrien had gone to the French opera, and John opened his portmanteau, took out some paper, and passing his fingers through the thick curls that clustered round his handsome white brow, he sat down to "Miriam the Jewess." What he said to her, and what she answered him, we need not record here. It was twelve when they parted, and John only fell asleep to dream of her as she stood on the mountain, looking with her dark eyes at the rising sun.

CHAPTER XI.

THE days that followed this first day were to John Dorrien days of enchantment. His mother did not go about with him, as he had hoped she would—to do so would have revived too many bitter recollections of her early married life; but though he did his sight-seeing alone, he could not help enjoying it to the heart's core. There is no real loneliness for the young, when they have good spirits, and good health, and John had both in plenty. His frame was light and active, his temper was happy and hopeful. He had inherited more than his handsome Irish eyes from his great-grandmother. He was capable of great sorrows, for his feelings were keen, but it was not in his nature to fret or to repine, or to put by a present joy because there might be trouble in store. Paris, the wonderful city, threw her spell upon him, and John was

too eager, too young, and too imaginative, to resist the Syren when she came to him, clothed either in the dim glories of the past, or in the gay splendour of the present. The weather, too, was lovely, as it almost always is in early October. The sky was clear and blue, the sun was genial, and the air was so light that it made one glad to live. John rushed about from one end of Paris to the other, finding strange contrasts without seeking them. One early morning, he lingered about the Temple Gardens, where the Temple Tower of tragic memory once stood; and whilst children laughed and played around him, his heart thrilled with pity at the vision of a sad-eyed, stately Marie Antoinette, looking down at him from behind prison bars. An hour later, he was sauntering along the shaded alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, watching a gay cavalcade. The ladies were all young and lovely, or at least John thought them so, just as their horses seemed to him the most beautiful in the world; and as they rode swiftly past him, their fresh faces, flowing hair, and fleet motion charmed the boy's poetic fancy. But time is precious to sight-seers, and John

made the most of his. After modern loveliness came classic beauty. The cool green wood, with its lake and its waterfall, was quickly forsaken for the Salle des Antiques in the Louvre. There, faithless to his dark-eyed Miriam, John fell helplessly, hopelessly in love: firstly, with that haughty Diana *à la biche*, whose right hand draws an arrow from her quiver, and whose left rests so firmly on the head of a captive stag: secondly, with Polymnia, all meditation and poetic grace: thirdly, with two Roman empresses stately as goddesses, and well-nigh as fair: and, fourthly and lastly, with the Venus of Milo. How John loved the gracious majesty of her attitude, the sweetness of her beautiful face, the waves of her hair parted back from her classic brow, and how he raved about her to his mother when he got home, until Mr. Dorrien took him to the Opera, where a great singer, then in the meridian of her fame, ravished him to the seventh heavens And then the pictures the next day, the old Italian Masters, so dark, and so rich and holy; the quaint Dutch painters, the classic Poussins, the historic portraits, the drawings, and indeed the everything. No wonder that John Dorrien

felt in a fever, that the nights seemed too long, and the days too short for his ardour. Before the week was out, John knew Notre Dame better than he knew the parish church of Saint Ives. He had visited every other church worth seeing, discovered every spot made significant by great events in history, become familiar with public gardens, palaces, and promenades, seen Versailles and Saint Cloud; by that time, too, it must be confessed, that he was rather tired.

"I am afraid you have been overdoing it, John," said Mr. Dorrien, one morning, with his languid smile. "You will be fatigued to-night."

"Oh! no, sir," eagerly replied John, blushing, however, as he remembered that he meant to go and have another look at the Venus that afternoon.

"Ah! well, we shall see," said Mr. Dorrien, carelessly.

Mr. Dorrien was giving a dinner, and that was what he meant by saying that John would be fatigued that evening. There were to be only eight people present in all, Mr. Dorrien's own family and Mr. Brown included, yet this

dinner, as Mrs. Dorrien could see, was a grave, serious, solemn business dinner. The three strangers were to be Mr. Plummer, an Englishman, and a Monsieur and Madame Basnage, both French. The preparations made for these three people were on so costly a scale that Mrs. Dorrien's curiosity could not be restrained, and little though she and Mrs. Reginald sympathised, she actually invaded that lady's privacy in the afternoon, to obtain needful information.

Now, Mrs. Reginald was tired, she had been out the whole morning ordering in everything that money could get, and especially everything out of season. She had had to make frantic efforts in order to secure green peas to her liking, and had given their weight in gold—as she said, but then she liked figures of speech—for Mr. Dorrien's favourite strawberries. So Mrs. Reginald was tired and put out, and had just reclined back in her easy-chair, and thrown her handkerchief over her face, when Mrs. John's knock at her door disturbed her. Mrs. Reginald uttered a resigned "Come in," but her aspect was not gracious, and her welcome was formal.

"I am in such perplexity," exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, sinking down on a chair, and looking at Mrs. Reginald, who sat up straight and stiff. "This dinner, I see, is quite a grand affair, and I really have nothing to wear."

Mrs. Reginald was a woman, and could sympathise with Mrs. Dorrien in this, but she could suggest no remedy. She looked grave, and shook her head.

"I almost think that I had better not appear," continued Mrs. Dorrien. "Who are these people, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Business connections of Mr. Dorrien's. Mr. Plummer I know. I never saw the other two."

"Well, but who are they?" persisted Mrs. Dorrien.

"Mr. Plummer has been twenty years in France. He has something to do with Mr. Dorrien's Russian connexion, I believe; as to the other one, he is a great man down in Angoulême, and that is one of the great places for the manufacturing of paper, as you know, Mrs. John. I fancy that he and Mr. Dorrien are going to have some dealings together; and that is all *I* know, Mrs. John."

This was said pointedly, so as to show Mrs. John how she, Mrs. Reginald, saw very well that to ascertain the quality of the guests, and not to consult her on the difficulties of her toilet, had been Mrs. John's object in coming. John's mother saw that she could extract no more from Mrs. Reginald, and after again lamenting to that lady the deficiencies of her wardrobe, a lament which the other now heard with supreme indifference, she left her. Mrs. Dorrien was really annoyed at having to appear before strangers at a disadvantage, but she never seriously intended to remain in her room, and thereby abdicate. Accordingly, when the time came, she donned her old black silk dress, and tried to persuade herself that the cape of imitation black lace, which covered her neck and shoulders on the plea of delicate health, would do very well as a substitute for ornament, even as her jet earrings and bracelets would imply a sort of mourning. John, who knew nothing about dress, and who always thought his mother charming, praised her appearance.

"How nice you look, little mother!" he said, first surveying her from head to foot, then walking round her.

"My dear boy, no one could look nice with so shabby an old thing as this is."

"You mean your dress! Oh! little mother, what need you care about that, with such a figure as you have. I was at the Louvre this afternoon, and I assure you that you have quite the look of the Empress Livia, the wife of Augustus, you know."

"You silly boy," said Mrs. Dorrien, smiling fondly at him, "how can you talk such nonsense to your old mother?"

"But you are not old," exclaimed John, looking nettled, "you are quite young still."

"Hush!" interrupted his mother, kissing him. "I care about neither dress nor age, my dear, if I can but see you in your proper position. And now do get ready, for you have been flirting with Livia, or some other divinity, till you are late."

"Oh! I hope not," cried John, looking alarmed, for there was not much of the modern generation about him, and to be late for Mr. Dorrien's dinner would have been a calamity in his eyes. That misfortune did not come to pass. The whole family were gathered in Mr. Dorrien's

drawing-room a full half-hour before the guests arrived. For the first time the splendours of that apartment were revealed to John. The lofty frescoed ceiling, the gloomy old furniture, the old-fashioned mirrors, tall and narrow, impressed him, not as beautiful, but as ancient, ancestral, and venerable in their tarnished splendour, tokens of wealthy ease enjoyed by the men and women who had bequeathed to him his blood and name. It seemed made for that languid Mr. Dorrien, leaning back in his deep and dark arm-chair; for Mr. Brown, sitting straight on his, with business written on his tall yellow forehead and imperturbable face; for the stiff figure of Mrs. Reginald, clad in silk as stiff as herself; and for his pale and still elegant mother, with her look of decayed gentility. "It is a family picture by one of the old Dutch masters," thought John, looking round him with that quick sense and keen appreciation of the picturesque which was to be one of his chief enjoyments throughout life. That feeling of the fitness of things by no means struck John's mother; and even had she been aware of it, she would not have appreciated her share of the

family picture. It was hard when the guests arrived to go down to a stately old dining-room, and see the Dorrien plate, and the old Sèvres, with the Dorrien crest upon it, and feel at a disadvantage. It was very hard to sit down at Mr. Dorrien's luxurious table, with Madame Basnage, a florid dame, in amber satin and diamonds, and harder still to see Mrs. Reginald in stiff black moire and velvet, "so plain, but so good," as Mrs. Dorrien could not help remarking regretfully. But then there was compensation. Mrs. Dorrien was John's mother, and it was impossible for Mrs. Dorrien not to see that John, though silent, modest, and observant, played an important part at Mr. Dorrien's dinner. Mr. Dorrien indeed scarcely spoke to or looked at the young man, but he referred to him casually, carelessly, and significantly, as his relative and successor. Charles the Fifth, wearied with the cares of empire, could not have alluded otherwise to a young Philip the Second. Mr. Dorrien did not imply that he was going to abdicate, but he gave it to be understood that he wished to have a Dorrien at hand whenever he was inclined to do so. Mr. Dor-

rien, indeed, almost overdid John's Dorrienism, and even bestowed some superfluous regard on Mrs. Dorrien. Her silk dress might be poor, her lace cape imitation, and her jet ornaments contemptible—she was a Dorrien, the mother of the future Dorrien, and he treated her with the most scrupulous and formal politeness. What about her poverty; he, Mr. Dorrien, was rich, and the poverty or wealth of his relatives was nothing to him—perhaps indeed it was all the better that the mother of his heir should appear in such humble attire, and convince Monsieur Basnage, or anyone else, how independent of other money save his own was the present head of the old firm of Dorrien. Something of this Mrs. Dorrien felt, and it was half bitter, and half pleasant; but, to do her justice, the joy and pride of being John's mother were the strongest feelings of all. Her own position, and especially her son's, occupied her more during the progress of the meal, which was rather formal and silent, than Mr. Dorrien's guests. They were not very interesting. Mr. Plummer was long, lean, and taciturn. He kept his little eyes half shut, and enjoyed Mr. Dorrien's

good things with an occasional licking and smacking of his lips, which was more expressive of satisfaction than indicative of refinement. Mrs. Reginald shot at him on those occasions a look very like one of disgust; but Mr. Plummer's lids veiled the orbs beneath them, and he was happily unconscious of the displeasure of the lady of the house. Monsieur and Madame Basnage behaved very differently—they were much alike in person and manner, and were indeed not merely husband and wife, but near relations. Both were stout and florid, and looked good-natured; both were not merely ignorant and unrefined, but decidedly vulgar; and both enjoyed Mr. Dorrien's luxurious dinner, and praised it to each other with a want of tact and good-breeding rare in the French, where these qualities are not so often as elsewhere the exclusive attributes of the well-born and the well-educated. But this was not all; Monsieur and Madame Basnage were obstreperous and overbearing—they laughed at each other's jokes, they dogmatised over their own assertions, and they contradicted right and left, Mrs. Reginald especially.

For once, however, that lady's tongue was under special control. Mr. Dorrien had requested her to be particularly attentive to this vulgar pair, and she knew enough of Mr. Dorrien to feel sure that he had an object in view in making the request, and that this object must be satisfied; so she bore with their rudeness in stoic silence, though with plenty of disdain in her protruded lip. Perhaps some of that disdain shot at the master of the house, who laughed so frankly and so gaily at Monsieur Basnage's sallies; who was so tenderly attentive to Madame Basnage; who looked not merely a courteous, but even a delighted host. The dinner was inordinately long. Gentlemen do not sit over their wine in France, and Mr. Dorrien would not have suggested so uncivilized a custom on the day when his table was graced by the presence of a French lady. So the drawing-room was resorted to at once, and the sort of light, careless conversation suited to the occasion began to flit about.

To the surprise of Mrs. Dorrien, Mr. Plummer promptly made his way to her chair. Mr. Plummer had not much to say. Mr. Plummer

seemed to have no other ambition than to ascertain the exact degree of relationship between Mr. Dorrien and Mrs. Dorrien's son.

"Second cousins?—ah! And no one between—eh?"

"No one," laconically replied Mrs. Dorrien, looking dignified at this unceremonious catechising.

"Same great-grandfather, then?" pursued Mr. Plummer, who spoke, as he had dined, with his eyes half shut.

"Yes, sir, the same great-grandfather," replied Mrs. Dorrien, with frigid politeness.

Monsieur Basnage now came up with a cup of coffee in his hand, and Mr. Plummer walked away. Monsieur Basnage came to give, not to receive, information. Glancing towards Mr. Dorrien and John, both standing near his wife—who leaned back in her arm-chair, full-blown, like a sun-flower—Monsieur Basnage gave Mrs. Dorrien a biographical sketch of himself. Monsier Basnage had not always been a manufacturer of paper; he had been in the diamond trade for years, until his uncle, Monsieur Basnage, the father of Aurélie, had induced him to

leave diamonds and celibacy for Aurélie and paper. His uncle had a fancy for keeping the business in the family, and liked the name of Basnage beyond any other in the Directory. "Not the only person who had that fancy—hem!" and Monsieur Basnage winked knowingly towards John and Mr. Dorrien.

Monsieur Basnage was very vulgar, but he was more palatable than Mr. Plummer, and Mrs. Dorrien smiled graciously upon him. Mrs. Reginald might rustle in her moiré and velvet; she was John's mother.

Discourse of a totally different nature was going on in the meanwhile nigh Madame Basnage's chair. Mr. Dorrien—the courteous, the fastidious Mr. Dorrien—was descanting with that lady on the merits of the great Italian singer of the day, and John was listening, eager and attentive. He, too, had heard the singer, and thought her almost equal in beauty and fascination to Miriam the Jewess.

Madame Basnage, happy to be talking with so elegant and accomplished a gentleman as Mr. Dorrien, and fanning herself slowly all the time, outdid him in admiring enthusiasm of the

Diva, as she called her. Poor woman! she did not know that indifference to all men and to all things is the perfection of good manners and taste, so, as we say, she was enthusiastic.

"She is divine!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "When she comes in and sweeps across the stage, and looks at you *so*, and when she raises her hand *so*, she is divine!"

"She or her diamonds?" asked Mr. Dorrien, smiling; "for you know, madame, that the Diva, as you so justly call her, has the finest diamonds in Europe."

Madame Basnage burst out into a loud, pealing laugh.

"What! you, too, are caught with her diamonds?" she said, wagging her head humorously. "Ernest," she added, calling out to her husband across the room, "only think—Monsieur Dorrien believes in the diamonds!"

The Italian singer's diamonds had evidently been discussed between Ernest and Aurélie, for he understood the allusion at once, and leaving Mrs. Dorrien, walked over to his wife's chair.

"False—all false!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "I know false diamonds from real, Mon-

sieur. No, no; she sings like a bird, but her diamonds came from the Palais Royal, or from the Rue Castiglione."

"And you detected that from your box?" exclaimed Mr. Dorrien, with polite incredulity.

"I did, with the greatest ease. I was ten years in the diamond trade, Monsieur Dorrien—ten years. Besides," he modestly added, "it is the easiest thing in the world."

But Mr. Dorrien shook his head. It was not easy at all, in his opinion. Monsieur Basnage explained to him that he was mistaken, that it really was easy, and showed him how and why; and still Mr. Dorrien was obstinate, and clung to his opinion, and assured Monsieur Basnage that he had known excellent judges to be deceived, and so forth. And so the argument, courteous but tenacious, went on, each holding his ground, till Monsieur Basnage got nettled, and said:

"Show me one false diamond with twenty real diamonds of seemingly equal beauty, and see if I do not discover it at a glance, Monsieur, at a glance!"

Later, it seemed to Mrs. Dorrien—for this

conversation was audible to the whole room—later, we say, it seemed to her that Mr. Dorrien must have purposely brought matters to this point, so prompt was he to take immediate advantage of Monsieur Basnage's challenge. Taking a small key out of his pocket, he handed it to Mr. Brown, who sat a little in the background, saying quietly,

"Mr. Brown, *you* have the diamonds—will you be so kind as to let us see them, if you please?"

"The diamonds, sir!" said Mr. Brown, looking doubtful, with the key in his hand.

"Yes, Mr. Brown, the diamonds, if you please. I am so sorry to trouble you."

Mr. Brown rose and left the room. Mr. Dorrien turned back to Monsieur Basnage and said, pleasantly,

"I must let you into a bit of a secret, Monsieur Basnage. There are Dorrien diamonds, just as there are Crown diamonds. My grandfather presented them to his wife, and from her they came to mine. We went to a great ball soon after we were married, and one of the diamonds was lost. I never knew it till my

poor wife was on her death-bed, when she confessed that she had had it replaced by a paste diamond. That counterfeit I know, of course, but if you can find it out, say from the distance of your chair to the sofa, why, Monsieur Basnage, I shall confess myself conquered; and now let us test your skill, for here comes Monsieur Brown with the diamonds."

Mr. Brown entered the drawing-room as Mr. Dorrien spoke. He carried in his hand a very small inlaid casket, which he placed before his master. Mr. Dorrien rose, went to the other end of the room, and there opened the casket. He spread the contents on one of the sofa velvet cushions, which he placed in a slanting position; then he walked back to his place, saying, with a smile,

"The ladies, I daresay, will like a close view. Monsieur Basnage, of course, will not."

No one present, save Mr. Brown and John's mother, had ever seen the Dorrien diamonds, and everyone save Monsieur Basnage, who determinedly looked up at the ceiling, and Mr. Dorrien, who remained aloof, smiling languidly, gathered round the cushion on which the costly heirloom lay. Philosopher though she was,

Mrs. Reginald was not the person least anxious to have a good view. They were beautiful diamonds, clear and pure, full of living, flashing light, and though they were not of extravagant size, they were large enough, and plentiful enough, too, to be of exceeding value. A low tiara, but with a sparkling star in the centre, earrings with long drops, a brooch, and a narrow bracelet, shone on the dark velvet of the cushion with purest radiance. Madame Basnage was in ecstasies; Mrs. Reginald looked, admiring, and puzzled; there was a sad meaning on Mrs. Dorrien's face; John seemed to behold all the treasures of Golconda; and Mr. Plummer looked cool and indifferent. Diamonds, to say the truth, were mere folly to that practical gentleman. And now they all withdrew, save Mr. Brown, who stood by the cushion like a good old dragon guarding the treasures, and it was Monsieur Basnage's turn to look. He slightly bent forward, gave the diamonds a good steady gaze, then leaned back in his chair, and suspending his thumb in his waistcoat pockets, he said, with cool triumph,

"The false diamond is the last but one in the tiara."

Mr. Dorrien gave a start of surprise, but he quickly rallied, and with his usual courtesy, "I am conquered, Monsieur Basnage," said he. "You are a marvellous judge."

Monsieur Basnage looked modest, whilst everyone went to look at the counterfeit. To inexperienced eyes it was as clear, as transparent, nay, as brilliant as its companions. Mr. Dorrien laughed as he handed the costly trinkets back to Mr. Brown.

"The next Mrs. Dorrien must see about that false diamond," he said.

"Have you had them long?" asked Monsieur Basnage.

"My wife has been dead sixteen years," replied Mr. Dorrien, gravely.

Monsieur Basnage seemed to be reckoning how much the interest of these expensive heirlooms might amount to, but he did not state the figure aloud.

"It is extravagant," confessed Mr. Dorrien, smiling, "to keep up diamonds, but, you see, they are fine——"

"Very fine," significantly interrupted Monsieur Basnage.

"And we are a tenacious family. What we once hold we like to keep."

"Shall I put up the diamonds, sir?" asked Mr Brown.

"Yes, Mr. Brown, if you will be so kind."

Tiara, brooch, earrings, and bracelets returned to their inlaid home, and Mr. Brown slipped out of the room, as if he would rather no one should even suspect whither he was going. Mrs. Reginald, raising her eyebrows and pursing up her lips, returned to the fireplace; Mrs. Dorrien repeated these words to herself with a swelling, half sorrowful, half exultant heart, "The future Mrs. Dorrien." Her time was over, but her son's wife, whoever she might be, had a proud position before her.

"Fine—very fine," said Mr. Plummer, close by her side; "but you had seen them before, had you not, Mrs. Dorrien?"

"I had seen them, of course," replied Mrs. Dorrien, coldly.

"Mr. Dorrien will have to add to them," continued Mr. Plummer. "There should be a necklace, I fancy."

Mrs. Dorrien was silent. There had been a necklace, and she had noticed its absence.

"There must always be a necklace," persisted Mr. Plummer.

Mrs. Dorrien feigned deafness, but never had her hearing been more acute than it was then, for Mr. Brown had returned, and Mrs. Reginald, poking his waistcoat, was saying significantly, "Decebalus, Mr. Brown, Decebalus."

What could Mrs. Reginald mean? "Decebalus?" Mrs. Dorrien had never heard the name before, and what relation could it bear to Mr. Dorrien's diamonds? The thought pursued her even after the guests were gone, and, the evening's entertainment being over, she had returned to her sitting-room, where John soon joined her.

John was full of the dinner, which he thought a grand affair, and he had evidently been dazzled by the diamonds.

"Did you ever see such diamonds, little mother?" he said to her. "Why, they are like the crown-jewels in the Tower of London. I wonder where Mr. Brown keeps them?"

Mrs. Dorrien wondered too, but indeed she wondered about many things which she did not mention to John

CHAPTER XII.

IT had rained the whole morning. It was raining still. There had been no sight-seeing for John; that might be why his bright face looked rather clouded as he sat with his mother in her room. Mrs. Dorrien put down her work to gaze at him wistfully. John had not been like himself for some days, and it had been raining one day only. What ailed the boy?

"I am so sorry you cannot go out, dear!" she said.

John looked at the grey, leaden sky and said nothing.

"I like to hear your account of what you see," she continued; "you do pick up such odd bits! Was not Madame de Sevigné born near here?"

"Yes, hard by—Place Royale."

"You must show me the house. And was

not her father killed by Oliver Cromwell in battle?"

"It is said so."

"How interesting! Mr. Dorrien is delighted to see so young a man as you are take pleasure in such things."

John's face, which had cleared a little, darkened again.

"But I did not come to Paris to take pleasure in such things," said he, thrusting the tongs in the smouldering wood fire.

"Have you nothing to do?"

"Nothing that one of the junior clerks could not do twice as well as I do, little mother."

Mrs. Dorrien, though she had felt troubled at the long holiday Mr. Dorrien gave her son, tried to look easy and unconcerned, and said cheerfully,

"Mr. Dorrien wants you to get used to your new position."

"I am quite used to it," coolly answered the boy.

"Then he wishes you to enjoy yourself before he sets you to work."

"And I want to work, and not to enjoy myself," replied John, austerely. "When I was at Saint Ives I wanted to be a great scholar and pass my examination. When that was over I wanted to be a poet, and now that I have given that up I want to be a man of business. Whatever I do I wish to do thoroughly. If I am not to be something in this house, I would rather go back to London at once, look for a publisher, and owe nothing to anyone," added John, in the pride and independence of seventeen.

"But, my dear, business is so difficult!" began Mrs. Dorrien, trying not to look alarmed at this prospect.

"Difficult!" echoed John with a little laugh —"why, little mother, I have already found out that this business is all a mistake. You have seen Monsieur Basnage?—well, shall I tell you what he does? He simply absorbs the best part of our profits, for he manufactures every atom of paper we sell. Why don't we do it ourselves?" asked John, fixing his keen grey eyes on his mother's amazed face. "There is a paper-mill down at Saint Ives, and there could be a paper-mill on the Bièvre, close to Paris.

Why should we not have one of our own, make our own paper, and keep the profit Monsieur Basnage now pockets?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Dorrien, who felt rather frightened at John's dogmatic tone, "there is no doubt good reason for not doing anything of the kind. Mr. Dorrien may not care to extend his business."

"Then he should care," interrupted John, "for the business is by no means so extensive as it looks—I have found that much out."

Mrs. Dorrien became more and more uneasy. She did not want John to make any unpleasant discoveries, and, with a smile, she assured him that he must be quite mistaken. He was not behind the scenes yet, and had only a very imperfect notion of La Maison Dorrien.

John heard her without answering one word; but his mother felt and saw that he was not convinced.

The rain had ceased, and John, looking at the patches of blue sky, along which light clouds floated, said that he would go to the Library, Rue Richelieu, and read there for an hour, since neither Mr. Brown nor Mr. Dorrien

had any work for him. The new reading-room, so clear, so spacious, with its light columns and frescoes of blue sky, foliage, and clear air, telling readers of the beautiful world of nature, did not exist then; but in its stead, a long dull room, lined with books, and overlooking a quiet court with a little garden and a grey statue that seemed to guard for ever this calm retreat of learning, Here John, plunging deep into the magic pages of Froissart, gave himself up to chivalry and mediæval lore, and forgot that he had a trouble or a care.

That swift oblivion, the gift of the young, is not the privilege of their elders. Mrs. Dorrien, sitting in her room and hemming John's pocket-handkerchiefs, could not thus easily put by the anxious thoughts which their recent conversation had—not suggested, they existed before—but rendered more active. By what means, through whom, could she find out the truth? Mrs. Reginald might know, or at least suspect it, and Mrs. Reginald was very free-spoken, only she and Mrs. John, as, to her great disgust, she was now called, did not get on very well together. There was no open breach, but there

was a persistent difference of opinion, and with it secret jealousy. Not merely jealousy of position and authority, but actually jealousy of John. Mrs. Reginald had taken a great fancy to the young man. She could imagine that her Reginald would have been like him—not in person, but in his bright ways, in his happy laugh and genial aspect. As often as she could she lured him to her rooms—a proceeding which John's mother viewed with secret displeasure; and once or twice she had filled the cup of her iniquities by going out with him. To make matters worse, John reciprocated Mrs. Reginald's liking, thought her clever and amusing, took evident pleasure in her society, and never seemed to think that his little mother could be jealous of her—or, indeed, of anyone.

All this it was which made it awkward for Mrs. John now to seek Mrs. Reginald, and get information from her. Great, therefore, was her satisfaction when there came a smart tap at her door, and in answer to her low and languid "Come in," Mrs. Reginald appeared with her cloak and her bonnet on.

"Well, and where is that boy of yours, Mrs.

John?" she asked, airily. "I am going out, and I want a beau."

"John is gone out," replied John's mother, delighted to find the opportunity she wanted, and also rather pleased that Mrs. Reginald should be disappointed. "What a pity he did not know you were inclined for a walk, Mrs. Reginald. But, do you know, I think it will rain again soon. Do sit down awhile with me. I really feel dull, I do."

"No, I'll not sit," drily said Mrs. Reginald. "I think you want a lecture, Mrs. John, and I'll give you one standing," pursued Mrs. Reginald, setting her head on one side, so that her one eye might rest the more firmly on Mrs. John in her chair. "You feel dull—dull with a boy like yours. Why, if I had that boy, Mrs. John, I could never feel dull."

"Not even when he was out, Mrs. Reginald?" asked Mrs. John, smiling faintly.

"No," vigorously replied the other lady; "for I should sit and think of him."

"And so I do," replied Mrs. John, eagerly seizing the opening thus afforded; "but thinking of one's son and only child often brings on a world of care."

"Does it?" was the dry answer.

Mrs. Reginald seemed to be on her guard—moreover she was keen and shrewd, but there was a sort of *finesse* in Mrs. John Dorrien with which the other lady could not cope. John's mother made no direct attempt at procuring information; she took, to get it, the method against which Mrs. Reginald could least contend. She assumed, as she had done from the first, that her position in the house was unassailable, and that John, as Mr. Dorrien's heir-apparent, was on the very pinnacle of worldly prosperity.

"Then there's the house," she resumed—"it is such a weight on my mind—it is so large, so what shall I call it?"

Mrs. Reginald, still standing, inclined her head still more on one side, and looked curiously at Mrs. Dorrien.

"My dear Mrs. John," she kindly said, "don't trouble yourself about the house. Even when I am gone, Mr. Dorrien will be quite equal to it, take my word for it."

"Oh! dear, that is not what I mean, Mrs. Reginald. But you see if Mr. Dorrien begins

consulting a boy like John, who naturally comes to me at this time of the day, what will it be later?"

"Yes, *if* he does," ejaculated Mrs. Reginald.

"But, Mrs. Reginald, you do not seem to understand. John's position here is peculiar, very peculiar. He is but a boy, but he is his father's son,"—Mrs. Reginald raised her eyebrows at this indisputable proposition—"he is the great-grandson and namesake of that Mr. John Dorrien who was the most successful of all the Dorriens, and who made the firm what it is; and all these circumstances combined give him a weight he could not have otherwise. Indeed, when I think of his position, and of his youth, not eighteen yet, Mrs. Reginald, I get alarmed, lest it should turn his head outright."

Mrs. Reginald coughed and looked at Mrs. Dorrien with her shrewd bright eye. "No fear of that," she said drily.

"But there is fear, Mrs. Reginald. He is a good boy, but he was reared in poverty, and Mr. Dorrien makes too much of him; he gives him money, which I much object to; he takes him to the opera, and gives him expensive

tastes and habits; and, moreover, he lets him know and understand all day long that he is to have this vast business, and be some day the possessor of great wealth. It is too much, it is too much, Mrs. Reginald."

It certainly was too much for Mrs. Reginald.

"Mrs. John," she said, in her brusque way, "did you ever hear of the Gárlac of Killaune? I suppose not. Well, you must know that this Gárlac of Killaune had a stepmother, who made him a cake, a very large cake indeed, but with a stone in it. Now the Gárlac's father admired the size of the cake, but the Gárlac said to him, 'Ay, ay, a big cake, but little bread.'"

So dismayed was Mrs. John at the application of this parable that she gave a start, and said, off her guard, "Is the business so bad as all that, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Who said it was bad?" replied that lady, perceiving she had gone too far, and guessing somewhat late that she had fallen into a trap. "My meaning is that John's position here may not be as secure and as eminent as you consider it. He is a boy, as you say, and, boy-like, he may offend or displease our Mr. Dorrien, whom

we both know, Mrs. John. What then becomes of a position which he holds only on Mr. Dorrien's pleasure? If I were you, Mrs. John, I would not trouble myself about your boy's future greatness, though maybe I might ask myself if I had been wise in bringing him here?"

Mrs. John bit her lip and coloured. She was more than answered in every sense of the word.

"John came from duty," she said.

"Duty fiddlestick!" replied pitiless Mrs. Reginald. "Don't I know, Mrs. John, didn't you tell me yourself all about it, and how, if your poor husband did some foolish things, he was urged to them. True, those who drove him on risked and lost money, but he risked and lost ten times more. There, don't cry. It is hard to think over it, but knowing this, as you and I do, may I not ask what duty his father's son owes to Mr. Dorrien?"

Mrs. John Dorrien looked the picture of dismay as she heard Mrs. Reginald. The hand which held her needle and thread shook visibly as she said, "My dear Mrs. Reginald, you have not, I trust, ever said a word of this to John?"

"Do you think I was likely to do so?" asked

Mrs. Reginald, drawing up her tall figure.

"Because young people are so impetuous, so rash," pursued Mrs. John Dorrien; "and then there are matters which I can scarcely bear to think of; and I have never spoken of the past to John."

"No, poor boy, I daresay you have not," said Mrs. Reginald, in the tone of one who was taking John's part against his mother.

Mrs. John Dorrien bit her lip again. "I acted for the best," she said.

"Oh! of course. The best has a broad back. Well, it is not raining, and I think I shall have my walk all the same. Don't tell John I came for him, it would only make the lad conceited."

With a nod she took her leave of Mrs. John Dorrien, who did not feel as if she had had the best of the encounter. Poor woman, she grew very sick at heart as she thought over the past, and faced the present. She was not clear-sighted or keen enough to fathom out the motive which Mr. Dorrien must have had in bringing her and her boy to his house, but she felt sure that John was no great gainer by coming and wasting his youth in his cousin's service. Tardy

knowledge, for escape and deliverance were impossible now.

Mrs. Dorrien felt miserable and restless, she could not go on with her sewing. She put it by, and looked over her chest of drawers; but that would not answer, for she came on a packet of her husband's letters, that seemed like a reproach of what she had done to his son. She closed the drawer, and put the key in her pocket, as if she would for ever hide away that sad, irreparable past. Mrs. Dorrien then went and looked out from her window. The grass-grown court lay below her, dull, silent, cheerless; but there was a glimpse of the street beyond, and though it looked dark and dingy from the recent rain, it was better than solitude and bitter thoughts. She put on her bonnet and cloak, and went out at once. The afternoon was well worn, and the dull Autumn evening was coming on. The air felt chill and damp. Mrs. Dorrien did not go far, no further, indeed, than the little old church of Saint Elizabeth. It was very quiet, and its gloom and silence did her good. As she knelt and prayed, and looked at the little lamp burning with its feeble light before the

altar, hope came to her like that faithful light, and glimmered through the darkness of her troubled thoughts. She had committed a mistake, no doubt, but God is very kind, and she had meant well, and the Almighty would not punish her John for her error. And so, little by little, comfort came to her, and when she went home, Mrs. John Dorrien felt lighter and easier in her mind than when she came out.

"After all, I am sure it is a good thing for John to be here," she thought, as she passed under the lofty arch of La Maison Dorrien, and crossed once more its cold grey court. "It must be a good thing," she insisted in her own mind, with that obstinate belief in her own wisdom and prudence which only the severest lessons of experience could correct.

She had gone up the steps of the *perron*, and stood in the hall. There she became aware that the door of the library was ajar. This was one of the rooms on the ground-floor which Mr. Dorrien had denied his cousin's widow, and for which she felt, perhaps for that very reason, a ceaseless longing. She knew that John used to go and read there, and concluding that he

had returned from the Imperial Library, and was there now, she went in.

The room was vacant, but a light was burning on the table—no doubt John had left it there, careless boy. She sat down to wait for him; then she changed her mind, and thought she would visit the other rooms instead. She took the light and passed through them.

It was strange that Mrs. Dorrien so wished for those rooms, They were lofty and large, but they were dull, the furniture was dark and old, and had not beauty as well as antiquity to recommend it. Moreover, these were the rooms in which she had spent the close of her married life, her young husband had sat in that leather chair, in that last bed-chamber her boy had been born, and through that French window, opening out on the garden, she and he had passed—she a blooming, though not very young mother, he a fair, blue-eyed boy. She went up to it, she opened the wooden shutters, and stepped out on the wet grass. The dim moon was shining in the cloudy sky, and far away, the River god and his urn looked ghost-like in their pale, grey wintry light. Mrs. Dorrien's heart beat. She

longed to call back her lost happiness, her lost youth, her lost everything, but only tears came at her call, tears that are so much in a woman's life.

At length she turned back, but when she would have entered the room again, she almost stumbled in the darkness, for the light was gone, and before she could call John, she heard Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown talking in the next room.

"Nonsense!" Mr. Dorrien was saying, and his voice had not its usual languid courtesy—"you are afraid of your own shadow, Brown. I tell you I brought that light in here myself, because the farthest room, we said, was the safest."

"Excuse me, sir, you took the light out again when you went to look for the diamonds."

But Mr. Dorrien was obstinate, and persisted in asserting that he had taken and left the light in the room in which both he and Mr. Brown had found it. Mrs. Dorrien, who at first had been inclined to come forward and reveal her presence, seemed rooted to the spot where she stood, behind the thick curtains, on hearing the word "diamonds."

"Have you got them all, sir?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Yes, here they are—the tiara, the brooch, and the bracelet. Try and get more upon them this time, Brown."

"It is no use, sir; he will not give more."

"If he would only give a fair price for them," said Mr. Dorrien, musingly, "I should not mind parting with them."

"He will not, sir."

"No, I suppose not. And when do you start, Brown?"

"To-morrow, sir."

"You are sure he does not know you?"

"I have been thirty years out of England, sir."

"Very true. I am sorry to send you off so far, Brown, but, you see, it would never do here. I met Basnage yesterday. He has taken a fancy to John."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes," drily replied Mr. Dorrien. "Basnage has a daughter. It has done very well, Mr. Brown, having this boy here."

Mr. Brown did not answer. The room was

so still, that Mrs. Dorrien could hear the little snap of a jewel-case.

"All right?" inquired Mr. Dorrien,

"All right, sir."

"Well, then, good night, Brown—be careful."

"Very careful, sir."

"Of course you will be back by Tuesday?"

"Yes, sir, by Tuesday."

They went out together. On the threshold they probably met John, for Mrs. Dorrien heard his clear young voice, saying, "I shall be glad of the key—I want Plato."

"Plato, you young Grecian!—there, take the key."

Mrs. Dorrien heard them going out together; she also heard John moving the books. When she felt sure that he was alone, she came out from behind the damask curtain, and stepping softly across the floor, she appeared before him.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, amazed.

Mrs. Dorrien raised her hand and motioned him to be silent.

"Do not say that I was here," she said, as she passed by him, on her way out. "I will tell you all about it later." She opened the

door and slipped upstairs unseen to her room. She reached it breathless, glad to have escaped detection, but filled with trouble and dismay at what she had heard.

And so this was the use to which Mr. Dorrien put the diamonds he had displayed to his guests only a few evenings before this! They had been reset in Paris for his wife, the young heiress, and for a few days they had been in Mrs. John Dorrien's hands. She had tried them all on, and laughingly appeared before her husband thus adorned.

"Well, my dear," he had said, with a smile, "they suit you charmingly; and who knows but you shall have diamonds as good and handsome as these some day?"

And these same diamonds, minus the necklace, which had probably been already disposed of, Mr. Brown was now taking to England to raise money on. This was the condition to which the great firm of Dorrien had fallen—this was the inheritance, the kingdom, to which Mr. Dorrien had called her son! knowing, as she did, the cold, reckless character of the man, she understood why he had done so. To take

a penniless heir implied wealth, and might help to blind one or two. True, it might leave that one or two clear-sighted, but if ruin lay before him, what did Mr. Dorrien care for the two or three hundreds Mrs. Dorrien, and her debts, and her maintenance, and John's might cost? If he lost all, his creditors, and not he, would pay; and if he did not lose, what matter about the money? A good card is worth anything to a gambler who is playing his last stake, and such a card John had been in Mr. Dorrien's hand. He was worth very little, to be sure, but a little is better than nothing. For La Maison Dorrien was in too low a state to get a moneyed partner, or to lay bare its concerns to a stranger's eye; but John might be useful now or in the future, and on the chance he had been called in, thanks to his mother, and she was powerless to retrace this fatal step. Mr. Dorrien had paid her debts, brought her to his house, and he held her and John in bondage, none the less sure for being unacknowledged. John might spend the best years of his youth in this house, and what would be his gain in the end?

These dreary meditations were not over when

John came up with Plato. He evidently expected his mother to explain her presence in the room below, and she did so, but in guarded language.

"I found the door open and went in," said she, "and Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown came in too, but did not see me. They only said a few words, but, as they left without having perceived me, I would rather they should not know that I was there. I had stepped out into the garden, and had no thought or intention of listening to them, till the thing was done, and indeed over. That is all; but of course it is better not to mention it."

John looked in some wonder at his mother; he found her manner constrained and cold, but more than this she would not say. Grievous as was her disappointment, Mrs. Dorrien was resolved to bear it in silence, to drop no hint, to make no sign which could enlighten John and give him a clue to his real position. He must learn it sooner or later, but by the time that he did learn it he would, she hoped, have given up "Miriam the Jewess," and there would be that much gain out of their grievous loss.

John read Plato, and Mrs. Dorrien brooded over her troubles, till the dinner-bell rang, when they both went down. When Mr. Dorrien took his place at the dinner-table he seemed in unusually good spirits. Care had not left a wrinkle on his brow. He drank his wine with zest, he laughed and jested with John, and took him to the play when dinner was over.

"I shall leave you to take care of the ladies, Mr. Brown," he said, gaily. "You look remarkably well this evening, Mr. Brown."

"I feel very well, sir," replied Mr. Brown, whom Mrs. Dorrien had watched and observed in vain. No sign of change, for better or for worse, had she seen in his stolid face.

Mr. Brown's care of the ladies did not extend beyond ten o'clock, when he left them, and the little party broke up, Mrs. Reginald to go to bed, and Mrs. John to sit up for her son. He did not come home before one in the morning; he seemed quite happy, not at all tired, and thoroughly oblivious of the fact that he wished for work, and not for pleasure.

"I suppose you enjoyed yourself?" said his mother, giving him a wistful look.

"So much, little mother! Mr. Dorrien was in such good spirits. I never saw him so merry."

Poor Mrs. Dorrien sighed; she began to fear that Mr. Dorrien's good spirits were one of the signs of the times.

The next morning Mr. Dorrien was sorry to declare that Mr. Brown, who had looked so well, had a very bad cold, and could not come to business. He took his place, and enlisted John as his chief assistant; so John, at least, told his mother.

"We are very busy just now, little mother," said John, with just a touch of consequence upon him, "and shall be so till the fourth or fifth of next month, says Mr. Dorrien. This is our paying time, and it is bills and money, bills and money, all the day long. It is the cashier who pays, of course, but Mr. Dorrien and I look through it first—that is how I know. We paid more than ten thousand francs, which is four hundred pounds sterling, to-day. Now, suppose it goes on so for ten days—and Mr. Dorrien says it will—think of all the money that will have left our hands."

Mrs. Dorrien winced. She knew how dan-

gerously fine and frail is the barrier between a falling firm and insolvency.

"So much of that money goes to Monsieur Basnage," resumed John. "It is a pity, it is indeed, that Mr. Dorrien will not have a mill. I mentioned it to him to-day, but he says it would be too much trouble. Trouble!" indignantly added John, "as if one ought to care for trouble when one has an end in view."

Mrs. Dorrien suggested that Mr. Dorrien knew best, but John did not hesitate to scout the idea.

"Business is not so mysterious as you think, little mother," he said, "and this one seems to me a sort of A B C matter. It is nothing but working hard, and giving one's whole mind to it."

Mr. Brown's cold prevented his attendance, and compelled that of John the next day. In the evening he said to his mother:

"We paid nine thousand seven hundred and fifty-four francs, seventy-five centimes to-day, little mother. Now if we had the paper-mill I shall venture to say that we should not have paid more than two-thirds of that money."

But, spite this censure, John continued to take note of the money that passed out of Mr. Dorrien's hands with boyish accuracy; and as Mr. Brown's cold still kept him confined to his room, to Mr. Dorrien's great annoyance, and as bills still came in, and were paid as soon as presented, John had every opportunity of ascertaining to what a sound and wealthy house he had come; but the more he was impressed with its prosperity, the more he regretted the paper-mill—that would have increased it threefold, said John.

All this time Mrs. Dorrien watched Mr. Dorrien, without seeming to do so. She found little or no change in his appearance. His brow was as smooth, his bearing as even and courteous, as ever. "He is accustomed to it," thought Mrs. Dorrien, bitterly.

"Only think, little mother," said John to her on the Monday morning. "We shall have thirty thousand francs to pay to-morrow, actually thirty, and that is fourteen hundred pounds sterling! To think of making all that money by note-paper and envelopes!" His tone was both admiring and exulting, but Mrs. Dor-

rien's brow was clouded as she thought: "Suppose Mr. Brown should not come back with the money." But Mr. Brown did come back, or rather his cold was cured, and on the Tuesday morning he was at his desk as usual, and John was released by Mr. Dorrien. The young man, however, took care to ascertain and to tell his mother that the thirty thousand francs had been paid. "Half in notes and half gold," said John, amazed, "for I saw it all! Is it possible, little mother, that I shall ever have so much money as that?"

He spoke more in wonder than in covetousness, but his poor mother sighed, "Ah! if he knew, my poor boy, if he knew how Mr. Dorrien got that money!"

John, however, did not know, and did not even suspect; and Mrs. Dorrien, who thought she knew all, or almost all about her son's precarious position in his cousin's house, was mistaken. More information was to come; and this time she had not to seek for it, to sound Mrs. Reginald or to listen to Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown. Mr. Dorrien himself was her informant. Tempted by the Autumn brightness of the morn-

ing, Mrs. John Dorrien went down to the garden, about a fortnight after Mr. Brown's return. She was thinking about him, wondering when he would go away again to release the diamonds from their captivity, or indeed if he would ever go again, when Mr. Dorrien's voice behind her said:

"I am glad you are well enough to enjoy this pleasant morning."

Mrs. Dorrien turned round and saw him, tall, languid, courteous, and smiling. She said the morning was lovely, but confessed no enjoyment in it.

"Where is John?" asked her cousin.

"John is gone out. My dear Mr. Dorrien," she added impressively, "do you not give that boy too much liberty—ought he not to work?"

"He shall soon work, as hard as you wish him to do so," answered Mr. Dorrien with a smile; "indeed his whole future, as I have planned it out for him, is not one of idleness."

Mrs. Dorrien guessed that something was coming, and became attentive.

"If my son had answered my expectations and lived, he would have held here the position

to which John is destined; but he died a few years ago, as I daresay you know, and his child being a girl——"

They were walking side by side along the one gravel path of Mr. Dorrien's garden. At the word "girl" Mrs. Dorrien stopped. "Was he married!" she could not help exclaiming.

"Oh! yes, were you not aware of it? He married a Creole lady of some property, a widow and a Countess. They had but one child, and that child was a girl, now about ten years old, I believe. The Countess of Armaillé—she has persisted in keeping her first husband's name—was, as I said, a lady of property, but she contrived to get through some money and land, and is now in very reduced circumstances, especially since the death of her eldest daughter, the child of her first husband. This young lady, it seems, was rich, but her wealth has not gone to her half-sister. The Countess d'Armaillé tried to enforce her claim by law and failed, and the failure, I need scarcely say, impoverished her utterly. Although I have not much reason to be pleased with that lady, she is, nevertheless, my son's widow, and the mother of my grand-

daughter. I have, accordingly, offered her a home in my house. She is coming, and, in a few days," added Mr. Dorrien, nodding towards the windows of the room, on the ground-floor, by which they were then passing, "she will occupy these rooms."

Mrs. Dorrien was silent. She knew now why Mr. Dorrien had reserved these rooms. All these days and weeks he had had this in his mind. What would come next? Mr. Dorrien did not keep her long in suspense.

"My grand-daughter," he continued, "will naturally inherit all I have to leave, but it is my wish, if the thing be possible, that this house should not pass out of the Dorriens. I have, therefore, brought John here. I find that though commerce be not his bent—no more was it mine—he has both the will and the ability which it requires. He has only to go on as he has begun, and he will do very well; six or seven years hence he can marry my grand-daughter, and carry on the business, under my control, of course, whilst I live. I had a great regard for his father, and I am very pleased to have it in my power to continue that regard to poor John's son."

If Mr. Dorrien's grand-daughter had been a Princess Royal he could not have spoken with more condescending good-will than he did; and bitter indeed as was her mortification to find how secondary a place poor John held in Mr. Dorrien's house after all, Mrs. Dorrien might have swallowed the bitter pill with a good grace, and not rebelled against this unsuspected rival, if it were not for the diamonds. But, knowing what she did, it was more than she could bear to find John saddled with a wife as well as with a falling house; and there was decided asperity in her tone as she exclaimed,

"My dear Mr. Dorrien, how premature!"

"Well, the young people need know nothing about it yet; but I have mentioned it to you, my dear Mrs. John, that you may, so far as in your power lies, influence your son. I need not tell you that it is for his good I speak."

"Of course—of course," she said, bitterly; "but suppose that your grand-daughter, Mr. Dorrien, should not like my son—I mean, when she grows up to be a young woman."

"I should be very sorry for John," calmly answered Mr. Dorrien. Mrs. Dorrien could

scarcely restrain her indignation. "But," continued Mr. Dorrien, "I do not think it possible. John, it seems to me, has a great many of the gifts which are likely to attract a girl."

Mrs. Dorrien longed to burst out with—"But what if my son should not like your grand-daughter?" but she held her tongue and was silent. She was caught in a trap. Escape now was out of the question. She owed Mr. Dorrien money, she had broken up her little home at his call, she had half-cheated her son into complying with his wishes, she had diverted John's future from its natural course, and for ever broken up those classical studies which she had once been so anxious to secure for him. What could she do now but submit, hard though were Mr. Dorrien's terms? And yet she rebelled, and could not help betraying that rebellion—which was probably apparent to her companion, for after a brief pause he said,

"I thought it fair, my dear Mrs. John, to mention these things to you. I need not say what my wishes are; I have just expressed them. But if yours should not coincide with mine in this particular case, why, there is no

harm done. John"—Mr. Dorrien laid his long white hand on Mrs. Dorrien's arm and looked expressively into her face—"John can go back to Saint Ives to-morrow, if you wish it, my dear Mrs. John. He will have had a holiday and seen Paris, and there is no harm done."

Mrs. Dorrien's hot indignation fell down to zero. John go back to Saint Ives! And how was she to keep him there? Besides, though Mr. Dorrien was too civil to say so, did not his words imply that she should go back to Kensington to work, for which, alas! her bad health and bad sight now unfitted her—to future debts, which no Mr. Dorrien would come forth to pay? She shrank from the prospect with not unnatural terror and heart-sickening. Besides, was there not that Miriam, with her fatal Jewish beauty, to lure away her poor boy to the destruction of a poet's lot? Last, and certainly least, the comfort of her new home—comfort coming, too, at a time of life when it is most valued—withheld Mrs. Dorrien from rushing back again to the old laborious and penurious independence.

"My dear Mr. Dorrien," she said, trying to

laugh, "I only expressed a very natural fear lest feelings which neither you nor I can control should interfere with your plans. I need not tell you that young people will sometimes have their own way,"

"Very true; but their elders can perhaps manage so that the 'own way' of young people shall be such as they, the elders, wish it to be."

There was a moment's silence after Mr. Dorrien had said these words; then, swallowing down as best she might the bitterness that would come uppermost, Mrs. Dorrien replied:

"I shall do my best."

"I trust you will, and that you may succeed, too—for I like John exceedingly," was Mr. Dorrien's gracious reply. And thus he won the day, so far as this matter went.

CHAPTER XIII.

WINTER was over. Spring had come; and Spring in Paris often has days so fair that they seem borrowed from Summer—days when the wind is not too keen and the sun is not too fierce—days of sweet delusive promise that is rarely fulfilled on the morrow.

On the morning of such a day, John, who had been out on business—for he was fairly yoked to the car now, and need not complain of too much leisure—came home through Mr. Dorrien's garden, after letting himself in by a postern door, to save a long round. The sky was cloudless, the sun was genial. There was a twittering of birds and a humming of insects in the air, and here and there little shy daisies peeped out of the grass and lifted up their modest heads in the sunlight. Even the old River-god, bending over his stone urn, had a

mellower and a milder look than in the Winter time, when his hair and beard were hung with icicles, and all his outlines were rounded with a chill covering of snow.

John Dorrien felt within himself that sense of buoyant life which is the great gift of youth. He walked briskly on, whistling as he went, till he came to the fountain, where the sight of a group seated on the stone bench near it suddenly checked his blithe mood. He ceased whistling, and if he did not step aside, it was only his good manners that prevented him from doing so.

The little Countess, now Mrs. George Dorrien—for her father-in-law had inexorably insisted that she should drop her first husband's name before she entered his house—sat on one end of the bench She was still young in years, but had got old and faded before her time, and every trace of beauty was gone for ever from her face. Her hands lay idly on her lap, and the weariness of *ennui* was in her whole aspect. Nigh her sat her sister-in-law. Mademoiselle Mélanie was not much altered. She was the same tall, pale, thin woman who had

flung the cup of broth across Mr. Dorrien's drawing-room carpet. That spilt cup had been very fatal to the lady, for Mr. Dorrien had peremptorily declared that, save to call on her sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Mélanie should never cross his threshold. She had, accordingly, taken rooms in the neighbourhood, where she slept and boarded, but she spent a considerable portion of her time with Mrs. George Dorrien. She was now as busy and industrious as that lady was idle and inert, and her needle and thread flew through her work as swiftly as though the completion of the muslin trimming she was engaged on were a matter of life and death. Antoinette, Mr. Dorrien's grand-daughter, sat on a little chair nigh these two. The light shadow of young foliage—for she sat beneath one of the tall garden-trees—played on the child's little sallow face. She looked straight before her with sad dark eyes. A big doll lay on her lap, a little Maltese dog was curled lovingly at her feet, but she neither played with the one nor caressed the other. She sat perfectly still, with a listlessness very different from that of her mother, for it was full of

pining and sorrow, plainly expressed on her childish face. Now, if John Dorrien could have shunned this group, he would most willingly have done so. He felt a secret contempt for Mrs. George Dorrien's mental weakness, he heartily disliked Mademoiselle Mélanie, and a hint which Mr. Dorrien had dropped, with seeming but intentional inadvertence, concerning Antoinette, had utterly disgusted the youth. He was too generous to dislike the child because of her grandfather's wishes; but the mere thought that this little girl of ten should succeed to the lovely and high-souled Miriam in his affection, was odious to him. He shunned her presence whenever he could do so, and it fortunately happened that Antoinette showed no appreciation of his company. She did not appear to dislike him—he was simply indifferent to her, as indeed everything and everyone seemed to be. She now took no notice of his approach, and indeed Mademoiselle Mélanie was the only one of the three by whom it was acknowledged.

"A lovely morning, Monsieur John," she said in French.

Monsieur John replied that it was a lovely

morning. His look fell, casually perhaps, on the listless child as he spoke. Mademoiselle Mélanie shook her head and raised her eyes, so that the whites alone were visible.

"Ah!" she said, mournfully, "it was too much for the dear child; her heart is in her elder sister's grave. She has never recovered it—she never will."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Reginald, who had come up, unperceived, and now stood close to them. "Why do you go, John?" she asked, as the young man, thinking this a favourable opportunity, attempted to slip away. John replied that he had work to do.

"Wait for me—I want you," said the lady. "Shall I tell you what ails that child of yours?" she added, addressing Mrs. George Dorrien. "She is too tall for her age. Ten! she looks twelve years old!"

"Creoles mature early," said Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"I would not let her sit so still," resumed Mrs. Reginald, persistently ignoring Mademoiselle Mélanie and addressing Mrs. George Dorrien. "I would make her run about, or play, or do anything but sit."

Mélanie's black eyes sparkled, and she compressed her lips, but not one word did she utter. The little Countess shivered, and muttered something about its being very cold. John was wondering how long Mrs. Reginald meant him to stay there, and Antoinette looked as if nothing could move her out of her languor and apathy. The little Maltese dog scratched her hand with his white paw, and thrust his nose into it. But she turned from him wearedly.

"Be quiet, Carlo," she said plaintively.

Mademoiselle Mélanie had not answered Mrs. Reginald, and she had no cup of broth to fling across a carpet, and thereby relieve her feelings; but unluckily Carlo was at hand, and when, in spite of the remonstrance of his little mistress, he again attempted to draw her attention, Mademoiselle Mélanie darted forward, pounced upon him, and flung him against the stone god close by. The little creature fell back grievously injured, and howling pitifully. The Countess put her fingers to her ears.

"You brute!" energetically said Mrs. Reginald; whilst John ran and picked up poor Carlo. On seeing her favourite thus treated,

Antoinette at first remained in her chair like one petrified; but when she saw John bringing back the dog in his arms, his white coat all blood-stained, she sprang up with sudden life, and flew at Mademoiselle Mélanie like a young fury.

"Oh! how dare you do it?" she cried, slapping her in the face—"how dare you kill my poor little Carlo! How dare you!—how dare you!" And her rage subsided into a passion of tears.

The suddenness of the attack seemed to turn Mélanie into stone, as indeed it took everyone else by surprise; but when she recovered, the expression of her face became so fell that Mrs. Reginald at once snatched away Antoinette, placed the child out of her reach, and holding the woman fast, said firmly, "You shall not touch her—I say you shall not!"

Mélanie did not stir, but she looked at Antoinette, who was sobbing pitifully over Carlo.

"So that is my thanks," she said in a low tone. "You did well to hold me. I think I would have killed her!—now it is over; but—but I shall never forget it!"

"Oh! Carlo is dead, dead!" sobbed Antoinette—"my Carlo, my little Carlo!"

"No, no," said John, soothingly, "he is not dead. Come with me to the kitchen, we will wash his wound."

He took her hand and led her away.

"They will all of them be the death of me," pitifully said the little Countess. "I wish that dog were dead. Why did you make him howl so, Mélanie?"

"She slapped me in the face," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, nodding over the fact—"she did—I shall remember it—that was my thanks."

"She is a very wicked child," said the Countess, weeping. "I wish it were she was dead instead of my other darling—oh! I do wish it."

"I daresay you do," muttered Mrs. Reginald, walking away. "Well, there's only one of them all I care for, and that is Carlo. Poor little fellow! I daresay the brute has killed or maimed him!"

But in this conclusion Mrs. Reginald was fortunately mistaken. Carlo was neither dead nor maimed, though he was much hurt. "He

will do!" Such was the verdict delivered by John in the kitchen, whither he had repaired, carrying the poor little fellow in his arms, and followed by Antoinette. The cook was out of the way, and the kitchen—a room of unusual size, with spotless red-tiled floor and shining copper saucepans on the wall—was vacant. The cook's chair and footstool stood by the hearth, where a fragrant *pot au feu* simmered in the ashes of a low wood fire. Antoinette, who was always tired, went and sat on the stool, and thence watched John as he took Carlo to the stone fountain and there washed his wound. The little patient creature even allowed the youth to bandage him with his pocket-handkerchief; and when this was done, and John softly laid Carlo on his little mistress's lap, she only sighed, and said drearily,

"Where is the use? Aunt will kill him another time, my poor little Carlo!"

"Do you think she would actually kill him?" asked John, in seeming doubt.

"Yes," replied Antoinette, deliberately, "I am sure she would. She is jealous of Carlo, you know. She hates me to be fond of him. I am

glad I slapped her in the face—bad, wicked Mélanie!" And her dark eyes flashed again with resentment, and she kissed Carlo, who gave a whine between pleasure and pain. "My poor little Carlo," said Antoinette, bending fondly over him. "She did it because she knows I am fonder of you than of anybody else in the whole wide world."

"Surely you love your mother better than Carlo?" argued John, looking down at her.

Antoinette, who still sat on the cook's foot-stool with Carlo on her lap, looked up at John Dorrien in some wonder.

"I love Carlo best," she said bluntly. "Mamma does not like me—she is always wishing I were dead instead of my sister. I like Carlo better than anything or anyone, and that is why Mélanie will kill him. What shall I do without him?—oh! what shall I do?"

Her tears flowed freely. She was evidently a badly-reared child, with no sense of duty, and little sense of right and wrong; but John pitied her and her grief. She loved her dog, and she feared for what she loved.

"Let me have Carlo," he said. "I will keep

him in my room, and Mademoiselle Mélanie cannot get at him there."

Antoinette at first looked delighted with the proposal, then her face fell. How was she to live without Carlo, and how would Carlo exist without her?

"You can come and see him as often as you like," said John.

"But he will not eat."

"Yes he will, if you feed him."

"Where is your room? Is it far away?"

"Come with me, and I will show it to you; but let me carry Carlo. I shall hurt him less than you do."

He raised the dog carefully and tenderly, and left the kitchen, followed by Antoinette. On their way upstairs they met Mr. Dorrien. He had just come in, and knew nothing of what had happened, but the bandaged dog at once caught his eye, and he asked, almost sharply, what had happened to Carlo. The little creature was a sort of favourite with him.

"Mélanie took and flung him against the stone god," sobbed Antoinette; "and we are taking him to John's room, that she may not kill him outright."

Mr. Dorrien looked at John as much as to say, "Is this true?" and, though reluctantly, John was obliged to confirm the child's statement.

"Ah!" was all Mr. Dorrien said, and he went on.

John's mother was out, and John took Antoinette straight to his own room.

"Put him on your bed," she said, imperatively; and, when that was done, "Give him your best pillow—the softest. And now put a chair nigh the bed, that he may jump down when he pleases. And a cup!—have you a cup for him? Put water in it. It must stand in a saucer, otherwise Carlo will not drink. And now stay with him whilst I go and fetch his biscuit."

"Well, but I must go and work," argued John.

"Yes, but Carlo must be minded," replied Antoinette, still imperative. "And I think I shall bring him some of that stuff in the *marmite* downstairs. It smelt very nice. And don't let him come after me, lest Mélanie should get him," she added, from the door.

John heard her tripping downstairs and patiently waited for her return, kindly soothing

Carlo the while. However distasteful might be to him the prospect of marrying Mr. Dorrien's grand-daughter at some future day, John had none of the superfluous dignity of seventeen about him. He was not ashamed of being kind to a dog, or even to a little girl. Antoinette, to do her justice, did not try his patience too far. She soon came back with the biscuit and the broth, which she offered Carlo, but, alas! in vain. Carlo turned his head away, and refused to eat or drink.

"He will not eat. Then he must die, if he will not eat," said Antoinette, with dreary conviction. "My lame sister would not eat, and she died."

"Your lame sister?" said John, surprised.

"Yes; she had an accident, you know," answered Antoinette. "Oh! it was such an accident! I cannot tell you about it. They think I do not know, but I do. I do," nodded Antoinette. "You will not tell again, if I tell you, will you?"

"No, I shall not," replied John, with involuntary curiosity.

"Well, stoop, and I will tell it in your ear."

He obeyed, and raising herself on tiptoe, Antoinette whispered,

"She did it—she served her like Carlo. She hated her, you know."

John Dorrien felt both shocked and startled.

"Does she hate you?" he asked.

"Oh! no," replied the child, seeming surprised at the question. "Of course she likes me, but she hates Carlo, and I must keep him out of her way."

This meant that Carlo should stay in John's room, but it also meant that Antoinette should remain in that sanctum and keep Carlo company. John, who had not foreseen this, and who dreaded some inroad on his books and papers, tried to convince Antoinette that solitude was the best thing for Carlo in his present condition; but he was so positively answered that Carlo, if left alone, must die, that he had to yield, and leave Antoinette and Carlo in possession.

Great was Mrs. Dorrien's surprise, when she came home, to hear a short bark proceeding from her son's room, and surprise turned into amazement when, entering it, she saw little

Carlo lying bandaged on a pillow on John's bed, and Antoinette fast asleep on a chair by him. The child's head was buried in the counterpane, and Carlo growled fiercely as Mrs. Dorrien approached her. Indeed, he made so much noise that Antoinette awoke.

"My dear," gently said John's mother, "what is the matter? Why is Carlo here?"

"John brought him here, that Mélanie might not kill him," was the child's grave answer.

Mrs. Dorrien was not the woman to abstain from questioning on receiving so strange a reply, and Antoinette was as communicative as she could desire. John's mother listened to her with such evident interest and attention that the child's sense of consequence was awakened. She told the story of Carlo's mishap in full, and also related that other story of her sister's accident, which she had already imparted to John, and she added thereto particulars into which he had forgotten to inquire.

"Well, my dear," soothingly said Mrs. Dorrien, "all this is very sad, but I dare say little Carlo will get well; only he must not stay here. We will find a nice place for him, dear, where

he shall be quite safe. Is that your handkerchief binding him? No, I see it is John's," and internally the careful mother sighed over the foolish boy's use of those best cambric handkerchiefs which she had only just hemmed for him.

But Antoinette would not hear of removing Carlo. He must stay, she said, for, if he did not, Mélanie would certainly kill him. Mrs. Dorrien was obliged to acquiesce in this necessity, but she made the best of the incident by getting into Antoinette's good graces and confidence, till the luncheon-bell rang, when Carlo was locked up for security. After luncheon, Mrs. John had a brief and quiet conversation with Mr. Dorrien, to whom she told all that Antoinette had related concerning her half-sister and Mélanie. Whether through the information she imparted, or because of his own conclusions concerning the violence of temper exhibited in the incident of the dog, Mr. Dorrien informed his daughter-in-law that Mademoiselle Mélanie must enter his house no more, not even as a visitor.

It is hard to say how some people acquire the power which they exercise over others. If

Antoinette's story was a true one—if the violence of her mother's sister-in-law had really caused the fatal accident, which first maimed, and perhaps ultimately killed, her elder sister, it was hard to understand how the mother of the injured child, to whom that child's death had brought both poverty and dependence, could lament, as she now did, the loss of Mademoiselle Mélanie's society. She gave no reason for doing so; she could not say that she wanted Mademoiselle Mélanie for any particular purpose—for profit, for pleasure, for amusement, for consolation or comfort—but looking pitifully up in Mr. Dorrien's face, she uttered a helpless "What shall I do?" which was, perhaps, the best of all reasons. She did not love that dark, sinister, tyrannical woman who ruled her, and, indeed, all that came within her reach, with a rod of iron; but she had been ruled so long that her liberty terrified her. What should she do, indeed, without Mélanie to lean upon, to think, act, and even talk for her? The vision of such liberty was disastrous to her untutored mind, and bewildered her. Mr. Dorrien, nevertheless, adhered to his resolve, and ignored his

daughter-in-law's distress. He could not, however, help declaring that in his opinion a person of such violent temper as Mademoiselle Mélanie was scarcely fitted to be the close companion of his grand-daughter.

"Yes, I know," plaintively said the little Countess, "and she is so dreadful; but still, you know, what shall I do?"

But, as we said, Mr. Dorrien ignored her distress, and submission was her only lot.

Carlo, who recovered more rapidly than could have been expected from the severe treatment he had got, thus won back the freedom of the house, and, indeed, was considered a sort of hero, and became popular. Mrs. Reginald took notice of him "because he had been so ill-used, little fellow," and Mr. Dorrien really thought that dog had been invaluable in giving him a decent pretence for expelling Mademoiselle Mélanie. He also attributed to Carlo the good understanding which had suddenly sprung up between John Dorrien and Carlo's little mistress.

"You and Antoinette seem to get on very well together," he said to John on the second

morning that followed Mademoiselle Mélanie's exile.

"Yes, sir, we do," answered the lad, blushing; but the remark annoyed him, and had well-nigh destroyed the very result which Mr. Dorrien wished for.

John did not become unkind to the child—he was incapable of that—he did not even snub Carlo, who seemed to remember that he had received the hospitality of his room, but that same afternoon he had what he considered a decisive conversation with Antoinette, whom he found sitting in the garden, with Carlo lying on her lap. Carlo was dull, she said, and she requested, rather imperatively, that John should amuse him. John laughed the idea to scorn, and kindly informed Antoinette that he was much too old for such nonsense. She might amuse Carlo, but it was out of the question that he should do anything of the kind. In short, he impressed the child with the fact that time had placed between them one of those barriers through which no goodwill on either side can ever break. Antoinette looked at him in perplexity. She did not think John old, and she

brooded over all he said till she could endure this state of doubt no longer; so, carrying Carlo in her arms, she made her way up to Mrs. Dorrien's room, and peeping in at the door, she said, in her old-fashioned way,

"Please may I come in?"

"Certainly, my dear," was Mrs. Dorrien's ready answer. "Sit down on that low chair. You are tired carrying Carlo."

"No, it's not that, but you live so high up, Mrs. John—so very high up."

"My dear, it is only a second floor."

"Well, but it is high up," plaintively said Antoinette. "I feel so tired when I come up to see you, Mrs. John."

Mrs. John looked compassionately at the little pale face. Would that frail bud ever blossom? But Antoinette had not come up to complain.

"Mrs. John," said she, looking earnestly at the lady, whilst she nursed Carlo, who fondly licked her little thin hand, "how old is John?"

"He will soon be eighteen. Why do you ask, my dear?"

"Because that is old—very old, is it not?"

"Eighteen is not old, my dear."

"Oh, but John says so."

Mrs. Dorrien gave a start and looked nervous; she questioned the child, learned from her all that John had said, and with a mother's quick intuition saw at once what his motive for saying it had been. Her heart fell at the thought that Antoinette might be as communicative with her grandfather as she had been with herself; and though that was not likely—for Mr. Dorrien seldom addressed a word to his grand-daughter, and scarcely looked at her—though, as we say, that was not likely, Mrs. Dorrien hastened, as far as she was able, to repair the mischief.

"Well, my dear," she soothingly said, "it is very true that now John is much older than you are; but some years hence you will be quite of an age, and it will be all right. You will be a young lady then."

Antoinette looked thoughtful, but not satisfied; she would probably have put more questions if Carlo had not whined.

"I must go," she said, rising. "Carlo wants to be in the garden. Good-bye, Mrs. John."

"Good-bye, my dear. Take care of the steps."

But doubt still haunted Antoinette's mind, and instead of going straight down she stood still on the staircase, and looking up at Mrs. Dorrien, who was bending over the bannisters to watch her slow descent, she said,

"Please, Mrs. John, do you mean that John will stop growing when I am a young lady?"

"And pray why should John stop growing when you are a young lady?" asked John, who came bounding up the stairs, light, active, and buoyant.

Antoinette did not answer, and Mrs. Dorrien coloured up and tried to laugh.

"There, dear, mind the steps," she said, going down to help the child. "Give me your hand; there, that will do nicely."

They went down together, and presently Mrs. John returned alone to the room, where John stood waiting for her, in reality, though to all seeming he was looking over the contents of his blotting-case.

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Dorrien with a sigh as she closed the door, "how delicate she

is! Will she ever get over that cough of hers?"

"Do you think she will die?" asked John, with a look of sudden concern.

"My dear, I do not say so; I only fear that she is very, very delicate. And if you can humour her do so, my dear. Poor Mr. Dorrien has plans for her which may come to naught, and in the meanwhile say nothing to the child which might make mischief if repeated."

John fixed his bright grey eyes on his mother's face, and said, in his straightforward way, "What do you mean, little mother?"

Mrs. Dorrien coughed. "My dear, you have been talking to Antoinette about your age, and all that. Better make no remarks—let Mr. Dorrien have his plans; it may all end in naught, as I said."

They exchanged looks. They had never spoken of Antoinette, and Mr. Dorrien's wishes concerning her and John, and yet each understood the other. John remained awhile, red and silent, standing with the blotting-case in his hand; then he said, distinctly and deliberately, "I shall never marry Antoinette."

He spoke so positively, so much in the tone

of one who knows his mind, that his mother heard him in blank dismay. At first she could not speak; at length she said,

"You surely will not tell Mr. Dorrien so? You are both so young—the child may die—so many things may happen."

"I will tell him so if he questions me, mother —I must."

Mrs. Dorrien was frightened, and tried argument. How could John tell that some years hence his mind would not change? Why, then, settle this matter so long beforehand, and injure himself with Mr. Dorrien? He need promise nothing, he need only be silent.

"My mind will not change," replied John; "I shall never marry Antoinette. She is capricious, ignorant, passionate, and she seems to have no sense of right or wrong; besides, she is a little girl."

"My dear boy, she will not always be so, and she may alter and improve, and though you dislike her now——"

"I do not dislike her," protested John, with some vehemence; "on the contrary, I am fond of Antoinette, but I shall never marry her!"

"How can you be sure of that, John?"

But John was quite sure—and is there any certainty like that of seventeen!—that his feelings would never alter, so far as Antoinette was concerned. In short, the little girl had no chance, and with a sense of gloomy despair Mrs. Dorrien felt that she had every chance of going back to the old life of poverty. She gazed at him as he stood before her straight, tall, unbending in attitude and temper; yet gentle and tender-looking in the pleasant light of the Spring morning which fell on his brown curls and fresh pleasant face; and she could not help saying, with some bitterness, as she pressed her hand to her aching lips:

"How can you be so hard to me, John!"

"Oh! little mother, how can you say that! I am not hard to you! You know what brought me here, what made me give up all I cared for! I did it because you told me that, involuntarily of course, my poor father had wronged Mr. Dorrien, and that, so far as I could, I ought to repair that wrong."

"My dear, I did not say that exactly," faltered Mrs. Dorrien, rather scared to have this brought

up, "at least, I did not make it a matter of duty for you to act as you have acted. I mean," she stammered, "that I left you free."

This was almost too much for John, but he compelled himself to say quietly:

"I do not regret having come—since it was right that I should do so; but no duty, no honour can make it right that I should be driven into marrying Mr. Dorrien's grand-daughter. And I never will."

"But, my dear boy, all I ask is that you should keep your own counsel."

John did not answer. His mother did not seem to understand that this was a matter of honour, that he must tell the truth if he was questioned. She also ignored the fact that, boy though he was, he had a right to defend his liberty. He had never thought of marriage, for maidens like Miriam the Jewess rarely lead youths to so practical a conclusion, but when the subject was forced upon him, his whole being revolted against compulsion. He could not realize another Antoinette than the one he knew, the pale, childish, capricious child, the passionate, wilful, and, as he had quickly detected, very

badly-reared mistress of Carlo, who really had little or no sense of right or wrong. Marry her! He would die first!

Mrs. Dorrien did not sleep much that night, she revolved a hundred plans, none of which seemed good or practicable in the morning, and all of which luckily proved quite useless. Antoinette was delicate, and she had a cough! But was she threatened with a decline, as her mother averred, and was the climate of the south of France really necessary to her? The doctor did not go quite so far, though he confessed that Paris did not seem to suit Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. Mr. Dorrien himself showed less interest in the subject than might have been expected. He was weary of his daughter-in-law's society, and rather dreaded lest his granddaughter should fall ill on his hands. The matter was soon settled. Antoinette was pronounced to require the mild air of Mentone, and thither she and her mother both repaired, before April had yielded to May.

"I must leave you, poor Carlo," said Antoinette, as she and John parted; "for Mélanie

would kill him, you know. You will give him his biscuit, poor little Carlo !"

Thus all Mrs. Dorrien's present apprehension came to naught, for once in Mentone, Antoinette and her mother stayed there, and Mademoiselle Mélanie with them.

"Mind my words, Mr. Brown," said Mrs. Reginald emphatically, "Antoinette is no more consumptive than I am. It is all that Mélanie's doing."

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